How God Calls Men

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INTRODUCTION

These simple studies are intended to suggest certain aspects of the serious question of vocation as illustrated in the career of leading characters in the Bible. The Book is considered as a plain record of human experience; and Jesus himself is studied as the greatest of the Hebrew prophets rather than as the Son of God and our Saviour.

The writer's esteemed friend, Dr. John T. Faris, made the suggestion that these studies should be cast in this form; his interest and help are gratefully acknowledged at the same time as he is absolved from responsibility for the working out of the idea. It would be the height of ingratitude to omit thanks to Professor Charles Foster Kent, for placing at the disposal of us all the vast collection of material gathered in "The Historical Bib e."

Work of this kind must be regarded as highly tentative, but the subject is of such great importance that it is necessary for many to make some attempt to illuminate it.

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CHAPTER I

The Calling of a Nation

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The most remarkable thing about the writings of the Hebrew prophets and historians is their breathing reality. Does not David live? Do we not know Jacob as friend knows friend? The whole picture is crowded with varied humanity —noble knights, brave warriors, crafty statesmen, base informers. Nor are the women less significant than the men. Though, no doubt, Ruth's place was "in the home," the Old Testament was not committed to the type; the most energetic of our modern women cannot afford to look down on Deborah, or Esther, or Jael.

Our enemies tell us that we Christians have achieved a very unworldly and vapory view of life. If we really have this kind of an outlook, we did not get it from the Old Testament. Romance will never die as long as we have the story of Joseph; but the most violent realists, who cry for "life as it is," are struck to silence, horrified and reverent, by a plain and unvarnished narrative like the story of the exploit of Amnon. And still we who pretend to a new broadmindedness cannot grasp that spacious frankness that led the chroniclers to set down all the weakness and all the sin of the most distinguished hero and powerful king of the race. There is no veil of reticence to cover the nakedness of David. Here in these old records is humanity—noble, generous, brave, brutal, vulgar humanity; it is all just as real as our happiest homes, or the slums of London, or the long lines of soaking trenches on the River Aisne.

Yet the purpose of these writings is not to glorify humanity, not even to offer an apology for man's many misdeeds; there rings through every book a persistent and plain determination

to proclaim the greatest of all realities—the presence of God. Imperfectly as the first men knew him, they thought of him as the one answer to the demands of their life. The great Book of humanity is the great Book of God.

II

The Hebrews were convinced that God had a purpose for the world and a purpose for man. There is everywhere that mental atmosphere so difficult to define—a sense of mission. So it is, as has been pointed out so often, that the history of Israel differs radically from all other histories because it is the story of a nation that considered itself commissioned by God to be his witness in the world. Out of the richness of its life the Hebrew race threw up into the light, one after another, great men and women who took on themselves the burden of the national vocation; and their history was crowned by the appearance of one who claimed to embody in himself the very will of the Father, the redemption of humanity from the shackles of its sin and the chains of its powerlessness.

When we remember the intensity of this sense of divine mission, it is easy to understand the significance of the frequent references to special calls to individuals. All the leaders of Israel are "called of God." The New Testament partakes of the same character as the Old: vocation is a leading theme of the Bible.

It is not hard to miss the significance of these striking events in the lives of men. The old writers do not tell a story as we do, and so we are likely to miss this very reality which is the mark of the Old Testament. These calls were not magical in the sense that they were unreasonable or arbitrary. Saul was perfectly fitted by personal courage and early training to become the first king of Israel. David proved through a long period of testing that he was the best man to unite the scattered tribes and lead them out to a larger life. It was to Paul of Tarsus, one who understood the Gentiles, and not to Peter, the Galilean fisherman, that the "man from Macedonia" appeared. We do not exactly understand the vision nowadays, but we can understand the Chinese Christian who is determined to carry Christianity to his own people; and sometimes it is with a start that we realize that this was the basis of Paul's call.

God called men then, just as he calls men today, through various means, using a language that appeals to our best reason at the same time as it inspires our heart. The exact "moment of conversion" may be vivid and decisive then as now; but life is a unified and rational experience, and much lies behind the decisive moment. Because of this, the experiences of these Hebrews are of value to us, and their value is greatly enhanced by the atmosphere of conviction that God moves in all phases of life. Ordinary, rational means are God's means just the same.

III

It is probable that the Hebrew's refusal to distinguish between "sacred" and "secular" simply grew out of the experiences of tribal life where such distinctions did not exist. In a sense there was no religion because everything was considered to be religious. The nation was the church, everyone was related directly as a member of the people to the God of Israel. Later, when the leaders of the nation began to desert Jehovah and his righteousness, there had to be drawn a line of division. But we have swung so far to the other extreme that we can well afford to learn a lesson from the men of old. To regard all the various departments of life as equally under God's rule, to maintain that every piece of necessary work honestly performed is a "divine calling," is not a surrender to barbaric ignorance, but is a grasping of the very fundamental principle of life. Without some such conviction, our efforts are meaningless and the world a sad jumble.

DAILY READINGS

First Week, First Day: The Chosen People

In the third month after the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai. And when they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the wilderness of Sinai, they encamped in the wilderness; and there Israel encamped before the mount. And Moses went up unto God, and Jehovah called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings,

and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.—Exodus 19: 1-6.

This is one only of many passages that insist upon the special mission entrusted to Israel.

Is not the challenge still before the nations today? The reward of obedience is not wealth or worldly power, but a knowledge of the right and the power to make it effective in the lives of men.

First Week, Second Day: Where Israel's Loyalty Belongs

For thus saith Jehovah unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live; but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el. Ye who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth, seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth (Jehovah is his name); that bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress.—Amos 5: 4-9.

This is the warning of a great prophet. The calling of the nation was always effectively handled by these leaders; their words are uncompromising—only as the nation obeys God will it prosper. Earlier the same prophet depicts Jehovah as saying: "You, O children of Israel—you only have I known of all families of the earth."

First Week, Third Day: The Inspired Artist

And Moses said unto the children of Israel, See, Jehovah hath called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and he hath filled him

with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise skilful works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones for setting, and in carving of wood, to work in all manner of skilful workmanship. And he hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of workmanship, of the engraver, and of the skilful workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any workmanship, and of those that devise skilful works. And Bezalel and Oholiab shall work, and every wise-hearted man, in whom Jehovah hath put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all the work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that Jehovah hath commanded.—Exodus 35: 30–36: 1.

Nothing less than the Spirit of God inspired Bezalel in his own work and in his teaching of his associates.

First Week, Fourth Day: The Spirit of Power

Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnah, and came to the vineyards of Timnah: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of Jehovah came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid; and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done.—Judges 14: 5, 6.

This Samson was in training as a warrior to defend the tribes against the Philistines, and the Spirit of God was with him in his youthful adventure just as it was with him later on when he went down singlehanded against Ashkelon.

If we could learn to regard all physical energy as spiritual force, would it not effect sweeping changes in the whole of life?

First Week, Fifth Day: The Promise to Abraham

Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will

I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. So Abram went, as Jehovah had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. . . . And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the oak of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. And Jehovah appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Jehovah, who appeared unto him. And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah. —Gen. 12: 1-4, 6-8.

The ancient city of Haran was, like Ur of the Chaldees, a pagan city devoted to the worship of the moon god, SIN. Abraham's purer conception of God made him alien to the whole spirit of the place. Thus he set out into the wilderness to develop among the members of his roving tribe faith in a righteous Father in heaven.

Here, too, we can see that everything in the situation would have strengthened the call. His very apprehension of the evil of the place as well as his devotion to God interpreted to him the course of his vocation.

Have we ever heard this kind of call?

First Week, Sixth Day: A Hymn of Worship

Jehovah reigneth; let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad.
Clouds and darkness are round about him:
Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.
A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his adversaries round about.
His lightnings lightened the world:
The earth saw, and trembled.
The mountains melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
The heavens declare his righteousness,
And all the peoples have seen his glory.
Let all them be put to shame that serve graven images,
That boast themselves of idols:
Worship him, all ye gods.

Zion heard and was glad,
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced,
Because of thy judgments, O Jehovah.
For thou, Jehovah, art most high above all the earth:
Thou art exalted far above all gods.
O ye that love Jehovah, hate evil:
He preserveth the souls of his saints;
He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.
Light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart.
Be glad in Jehovah, ye righteous;
And give thanks to his holy memorial name.—Psalm 97.

Songs are usually the best expression of the heart. There is no mistaking the whole spirit of this magnificent hymn, which is echoed and re-echoed through the Hebrew Psalter.

First Week, Seventh Day: The Oracles of God

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

What advantage then hath the Jew? or what is the profit of circumcision? Much every way: first of all, that they were intrusted with the oracles of God.—Rom. 2: 28–3: 2.

This is the statement of Paul, who, though a Jew, was born in the free city of Tarsus and was a Roman citizen. He had put behind him the religion of law and embraced Jesus Christ's religion of freedom, but he recognized to the fullest extent the divine mission of his race. Though they failed often and grievously, the world owes a debt it can never repay to those who were "intrusted with the oracles of God."

To what extent has our own nation been called of God?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

While any good history of the Hebrew nation will provide much food for meditation along the line suggested in this study, probably a reading of the Psalms will give the best idea of the reality of Israel's sense of mission. The great prophets, some of whom will be noticed in subsequent chapters, are of course our teachers in this field.

CHAPTER II

The City of the Great King

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Handbooks or a personally-conducted tour mean little i you would really understand a great city. Those who had th privilege of walking through the streets of London wit Charles Dickens were not sighing for a professional guide an one volume of O. Henry is worth a dozen trips on a sight seeing motor in New York. You and I can get only th flash and sweep of it all: O. Henry could see Broadway an Fifth Avenue and Wall Street all revolving like planets aroun the central soul of a seventeen-year-old factory girl. If yo would have the veil torn aside, then follow humbly some see like him who can see deeply enough and feel keenly enoug to all at once love and honor and fear a great city.

Three hundred years after the time of David, there walke about the streets of Jerusalem a young man with the sam seeing eye and understanding heart as our American stor teller. The young Isaiah was a child of the city and early i life the city cast over him a spell that held him to the en of his days.

David had set up his capital at Jerusalem and pushed hi dominions north to Damascus, south to the Red Sea, east t the desert, and west to the Mediterranean—except for th strip held by Israel's implacable enemies, the Philistines. Th recent capture of his city by the British army brings to min again its wonderful situation. Though it stood but a few miles from the greatest highway of the ancient world, it wa set among the hills in an almost impregnable position. Th whole tide of commerce between Egypt and the Euphrate rolled by the foot of the hills, but Jerusalem could overlook i

all, calm and detached. It was, indeed, "in the world but not of it."

The division of the kingdom of David after Solomon's death had left Jerusalem dominant only in the southern part of the land; and by the time of Isaiah, the King at Jerusalem held sway over only the small province of Judah. Of late years, the city had prospered and regained much of its lost prestige. And still there were the Temple and the Ark, and the dynasty of David held the throne.

II

Poet, prophet, and statesman, Isaiah saw his city in a hundred lights.

He gloried in the history of the city of David. To him it was the city of God. The Lord had prepared "a vineyard on a fruitful and sunny hill." He had "dug it and cleared it of stones, planted choice vines and built a tower in the midst." Jerusalem had been "a faithful city, full of justice." It was ever his triumphant cry: "The Lord hath founded Zion."

The city's strong position and its protecting walls, repaired and strengthened by Uzziah and Jotham, made a deep impression on the statesman's mind. The children of Israel, in a rough and violent age, lived amidst powerful and covetous neighbors. A man may love his native city under any circumstances, but it would be a superhuman triumph of hope to maintain faith in the high destiny of a community utterly exposed to the depredations of marauding armies from east and west. Heroic martyrdom would be the only path to glory. But the capacity for defense opens the possibility of a unique mission.

The present situation gave him more serious concern.

It is true that the city had prospered. Wealth was flowing in from every side. New buildings were rising in all quarters. All about the walls were wheat-fields, vineyards, and olive groves.

It is true that the smoke of sacrifice in the thronged Temple courts was a symbol of the fact that the worship of Jehovah was still at the center of the national life. There were many priests with their books of religion and sacred law. The rulers held to the ancient faith of Israel. Gradually the Temple was gaining ascendancy over the local shrines with

their many abuses and thus helping to bring about a spiritual solidarity among the people.

But the other side of the picture was darker.

Can we who have also seen great cities not feel the agony of the prophet's soul? The clatter of the streets, symbolic of struggle and unrest, strikes to his very heart. "O thou that art full of shoutings, a tumultuous city!" he cries. Wealth, wrung from the poor, is used to minister to luxury and vice. Pomp and vulgar display are the order of the day. "The daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet."

In spite of its isolation, the city has suffered from the influx of outsiders who are unsympathetic with the ancient religion and the old stern ideals. They pollute the very springs of life with their heathen rites and magic. Idols and soothsayers abound and nature-worship flourishes. These alien strains can be neither assimilated nor cast out.

Needless to say, the growth of wealth and the easy tolerance of alien ideals have corrupted the priesthood. In horror he points to the spiritual leaders—"The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine. . . . They err in their vision, they stumble in judgment."

Again, behind all this the statesman's eyes see the impending doom from without. The foreign policy of the nation is favorable to an entangling alliance with Assyria. Such a compact to Isaiah is a denial of the history and genius of his nation and a fatal blow to the realization of its best hopes. It is playing with fire to the limit of rashness.

III

The myriad voices of the city, each with its own accent and tone, brought God's call to Isaiah with an authority that the prophet could not escape. The desecrated Temple, the hideous idol, the magician at the street-corner, the pitiful child of the poor, the drunken priest—these spoke to him with a deadly persistence every hour of every day. Wherever he turned, debased religion, tainted wealth, perverted womanhood, pressed upon him the message that Jehovah would have him hear. And from the glorious past came whispers that bore the great challenge to meet his opportunity as the heroes of

old had met theirs, to complete by his effort what they had begun, to perfect by devotion and sacrifice the will of God for His city of Zion.

The call came to a point of supreme radiance in the vision that swept him up in the year of King Uzziah's death. It came as a burning conviction of his own unworthiness in the face of great need. It issued in his deep repentance followed by God's assurance of forgiveness, and the perfect commitment of Isaiah to the service of God in devotion to the cause of the city of David.

To Isaiah this city was born of God and destined for a high purpose. Though the Lord would purge it by the fire of judgment, even using Assyria as the rod of His anger and the staff of His indignation, yet the sacred ideal city was inviolable. It would rise renewed and purified and become the refuge for the afflicted.

And Isaiah thus set himself to help fulfil the purpose of God. And so well did he carry out his purpose that one of our leading historians sums it all up by saying: "Therefore, Jerusalem was Isaiah's Jerusalem even more than she was David's or Solomon's."

DAILY READINGS

Second Week, First Day: The Summons

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven. And I heard the voice of the

Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.—Isa. 6: 1-8.

Read this passage in the light of the suggestions put forward in the preceding comment. How may we interpret the successive steps in this personal experience of Isaiah in the light of his duty to his city?

Second Week, Second Day: The Judgment Against Idols

O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah. For thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they are filled with customs from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with the children of foreigners. And their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land also is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. And the mean man is bowed down, and the great man is brought low: therefore forgive them not. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, from before the terror of Jehovah, and from the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day.—Isa. 2: 5-11.

Is it possible to discern any connection between this situation and that in our own cities?

What is the modern equivalent of this alien paganism in Jerusalem?

How is it affecting our own characters?

Second Week, Third Day: The Judgment Against Levity

What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops? O thou that art full of shoutings, a tumultuous city, a joyous town; thy slain are not slain with the sword, neither are they dead in battle. All thy rulers fled away together, they were bound by the archers; all that were found of thee were bound together;

they fled afar off. Therefore said I, Look away from me, I will weep bitterly; labor not to comfort me for the destruction of the daughter of my people. . . .

And in that day did the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And Jehovah of hosts revealed himself in mine ears, Surely this iniquity shall not be forgiven you till ye die, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.—Isa. 22: 1-4, 12-14.

The world as it stands today is sufficient comment on this passage. It is not directed against humor—for levity is not humor; nor against cheerfulness—for levity is not cheerfulness; but against that essential carelessness of mind and heart that dominates Chicago, New York, and San Francisco just as it dominated Jerusalem. The modern American city has developed beyond description opportunities for dodging the serious things of life; reality is concealed beneath brilliant curiosities.

What was Isaiah's protection against this habit of mind?

Second Week, Fourth Day: The Judgment Against Oppressors of the Poor

Jehovah standeth up to contend, and standeth to judge the peoples. Jehovah will enter into judgment with the elders of his people, and the princes thereof: It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses: what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.—Isa. 3: 13-15.

This much-quoted passage seems to convey a kind of startled amazement in the form of that question: "What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor?" The enormity of the crime is very little appreciated by its perpetrators. There is something very vivid about the accusation: "It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard!" That is the point, of course—they are forever "eating up" things produced by the hard toil of other people, contributing nothing in return. Isaiah set his whole life against this type.

Why is this lavish destruction by non-producers of products of industry a matter of such importance now?

Second Week, Fifth Day: The Judgment Against Formal Religion

Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary of bearing them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. —Isa. 1: 10-17.

Second Week, Sixth Day: The Judgment Against Pride

For there shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low; and upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every lofty tower, and upon every fortified wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant imagery. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day.—Isa. 2: 12-17.

These are stirring words, which fit us very well in these days. There is, of course, a kind of pride that is merely an amiable weakness. The prevalent habit of boasting is very unpleasant; but it is not essentially wrong like that deep, cor-

rading pride which springs from a fundamental contempt for all those outside the narrow circle of our own immediate approval. This quiet sin lacks the blatant offense of bragging, but it is the most prevalent cause of injustice in our life.

A world war is being fought to decide whether or not this type of pride shall be allowed free play in the earth.

Second Week, Seventh Day: The Promise in the Judgment

In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem; when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning. And Jehovah will create over the whole habitation of mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory shall be spread a covering. And there shall be a pavilion for a shade in the day-time from the head, and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and from rain.

Therefore saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies; and I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thy tin; and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called The city of righteousness, a faithful town.—Isa. 4: 2-6; 1: 24-26.

These words are some of the expressions of Isaiah's faith in the triumph of his cause. Isaiah's vocation turns on this point. His sense of his own unworthiness, his apprehension of the needs of the people, his insight into the history of his nation—all these would have been powerless to stir Isaiah had he been without faith in the outcome. That God would bring out of Jerusalem something worthy of His name gave him the courage to face his stupendous task.

Can we share his faith as we look out over the world today?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Fully to appreciate Isaiah, one should trace out his career and study his writings. The two chapters on Isaiah in George Adam Smith's "Jerusalem" are very suggestive, and there are many commentaries that will repay a careful reading. Many of the passages are best appreciated when read aloud.

CHAPTER III

The Will and the Way

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

In every land and in every age we have representatives of that class of men who persist in a wrong course from seemingly the best of motives. We know too much about ourselves to condemn them all as hypocrites. We are quite sure that many of them are sincere from beginning to end; and, as for the rest, allowance must always be made for mankind's marvelous power of self-deception. Those who set themselves most sedulously to deceive their fellows often end in hopelessly fooling themselves—a pathetic tragedy in the case of many great characters.

We are quite sure that many of the cruelest promoters of the Inquisition were convinced of the righteousness of their course. Assassins of sound mind have gone forward to murder under the influence of the highest spiritual exaltation. We do not doubt for a moment that many Germans, trained through a generation in a certain mode of thought, devastated Belgium in a spirit of devotion to what they conceived to be the will of God. Indeed, the highest motive that sways mankind—religion—has been the most prolific source of intolerance and persecution. It is the man who cares who, when once on the path he has chosen, deviates neither to the right hand nor the left.

Such a man was Saul of Tarsus as he set his plans, with no mercy toward others or toward himself, to stamp out the first signs of Christianity, determined if necessary to exterminate every one of its adherents.

II

Rufus Jones, in his vivid little book "St. Paul the Hero," tells of the young Paul asking his mother which is the hardest

commandment to keep. The mother answers: "Thou shalt not have any other gods but Jehovah." They were Jews living under special privilege in the Roman city of Tarsus in Cilicia. All around them were people of alien faiths and strange customs. They were protected by a decree of Augustus from actual persecution; but there was ever around the young Hebrews the fascination of pagan life, which had drawn not a few away from the faith of their fathers. A faithful father and mother directed the steps of the youthful Paul into a career of devotion to the Law. The necessity of opposing firmly the surrounding heathenism must have encouraged a rigid devotion.

Further training in Jerusalem developed the energetic and determined student into a zealot whose indignation knew no bounds when he came upon a group of Followers of the Way who were striking at the very heart of the Law.

Paul's training was based on the very records we have been studying. The whole devotion of his intense nature was given to the faith which they were designed to maintain. He was eagerly devoted to the service of God, anxious to line up his life with God's purpose. Of course, he saw everything through the eyes of his teachers, and these had already fallen under the condemnation of Jesus, who charged them with perverting the true faith with their own traditions. But this Paul did not know; to him, they were the official representatives of God.

Then God began to call Paul, though Paul was slow to read the message. In the face of the dying Stephen, the persecutor probably first saw the warning. Had he been a lukewarm disciple of the Pharisees, he might never have seen the truth. His furious persecution brought before him at close range the steadfast faith and firm opposition of the Master's followers. He could not long remain ignorant of their character and their beliefs; he forced the knowledge upon himself. Steadily he learned what he did not wish to learn—what, indeed, he did not know he was learning—that these Christians were neither fools nor knaves, but men and women of courage and devotion like his own. Perhaps it was the steadfastness of the women that brought the truth home to him in all its force.

On the road to Damascus, the vision came to him. The same God who called to him from the wounds of the martyrs, spoke irresistibly to his own heart; and in a flash he was made

to realize that he had missed the way. God had pressed upon him a mass of evidence, culminating in a vivid revelation, and he could not now mistake its meaning. Only the overwhelming appeal could have touched a soul like his.

Still the real faith that was in him asserted itself. "Straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia." He determined to find the way with God alone as guide.

III

Paul's experience is not unique. Because of the importance of the man to whom it came, it was a significant event in the world; but many others have passed by the same way to an understanding of the truth. It would almost seem as if men were impelled sometimes to press their opposition to the limit in order that they may come to see things straight. Prominent statesmen have often become the butt of much scorn on the part of smaller men because of "conversions" on great policies, because they have been compelled to "eat their own words." From violent opposition they are turned to earnest defense simply because the intensity of their zeal has forced out the real character of the situation. There is something in experiences like these that may well give us pause.

Birth and early training tend to drive a man in a certain direction. We absorb the prejudices of our nation, of our social group, even of our home towns. As time goes on we may find that our whole body of belief is set against some opposing system. If we are in earnest then there will be conflict. Then it is that we may be addressed in a compelling voice, which without cant may be called the voice of God, urging us to a revision of our ideas of life and its significance. Sometimes the demand is upon us as it was upon Paul to forsake everything and turn our best energies in a new direction.

Such a call can hardly ever be mistaken, for it presses upon our reason against our desire and throws up the issues in a high light. It is the kind of call that comes to great men.

IV

Paul the Christian began his work among the men of his own race. Circumstances soon brought him again, however,

into touch with the Gentiles among whom he had grown up. In the light of his wider experience, he pondered the teachings of Jesus and came very rapidly to the firm conviction that the Gospel was not for the Jews alone, but for men and women of every race.

We know well the conflict that arose between him and the Jewish Christians. Even those who were willing to grant that Gentiles might be received into the fold were sure that they must first become Jews. The religion of Israel, even before the time of Christ, had so appealed to men of other nations that there were many proselytes. Thus, since Jesus had come to the Jews, it seemed natural enough that the first step for a Gentile should be association with the Jewish community. But Paul knew the Gentile mind, he was able to appreciate the quality of alien peoples. He had been freed from one bondage and he did not propose to enter another. His equipment was ideal not only to interpret the Gentiles to his fellow-Christians but to carry the message of a universal Gospel beyond the pale of Israel. That this had to be done and that he could do it, was enough for him.

So his vocation was crowned by the great decision to free Christianity once and for all from the bonds of place and race. Thus the first Christian missionary assumed his task.

DAILY READINGS

Third Week, First Day: The First Martyr

Now when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death.

And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men buried Stephen, and made great lamentation over him. But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and dragging men and women committed them to prison.—Acts 7: 54–8: 3.

Persecution was no new thing in Paul's time, nor has it died out in these days. It has often been said that persecution saved the Early Church: it brought a sense of unity of purpose and the real solidarity of people who suffer together for a great cause. Two centuries before Antiochus Epiphanes tried to stamp out the Jewish religion by cruelty and the answer was the rise of the great revolt under Judas Maccabeus. And the answer to this later persecution was—Paul himself.

Third Week, Second Day: The Decision

But Saul, yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: but rise, and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but beholding no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw nothing; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.—Acts 9: 1-9.

Try to interpret Paul's experience in the light of what went before. Think of other famous conversions of history and consider what lay behind each. What does the form of this record suggest as to Paul's previous attitude?

Has this experience any counterpart in our own lives?

Third Week, Third Day: An Interpretation

Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and the Lord said unto him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one named Saul, a man of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth; and he hath seen a man named Ananias coming in, and laying his hands on him, that he might receive his sight. But Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard from many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias departed, and entered into the house; and laying his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way which thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And straightway there fell from his eyes as it were scales, and he received his sight; and he arose and was baptized.—Acts 9: 10-18.

This experience of Paul's was of no greater significance to Paul himself than it was to the Christians of Antioch. They probably awaited his coming with very excusable fear. He was approaching with full authority from Jerusalem to carry persecution to the utmost limit.

Can you conceive of Philip II of Spain entering the Low Countries as a humble convert? Can you imagine the German generals suddenly approaching Serbia with intent to heal?

Third Week, Fourth Day: No Half-Measures

And he was certain days with the disciples that were at Damascus. And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God. And all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that in Jerusalem made havoc of them that called on this name? and he had come hither for this intent, that he might bring them bound before the chief priests. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ. . . .

And when he was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them going in and going out at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord: and he spake and disputed against the Grecian Jews; but they were seeking to kill him. And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.—Acts 9: 19b-22, 26-30.

This is the same man who was determined to exterminate the Christians. There is this characteristic about those that see the truth through the force of violent opposition: they usually become as powerful defenders as they were enemies. It was worth much to the Early Church that this great convert was one who did not know what it was to be lukewarm on any great issue. Collect the records of all the characters of history who have had this experience and study their common characteristics.

What is the peculiar significance for us in this fact of Paul's life? Is it worth while for us to study our own violent antipathies?

Third Week, Fifth Day: The Right to be a Christian

And certain men came down from Judæa and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. They therefore, being brought on their way by the church, passed through both Phœnicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of

the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.—Acts 15: 1-5.

The question was natural enough when we consider the history of the Jews, and sooner or later it had to be settled. Let us try to see the discusion as the early Christians saw it. We can then see the real nobility of the leaders—not alone Paul, but Peter and James.

Third Week, Sixth Day: The Stand for Liberty

Then after the space of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of the false brethren privily brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But from those who were reputed to be somewhat (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth not man's person)—they, I say, who were of repute imparted nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that I had been intrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel of the circumcision (for he that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles); and when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision; only they would that we should remember the poor; which very thing I was also zealous to do.—Gal. 2: 1-10.

This is Paul's own account of the difficulty. His conversion was a real "turning about," he took the road in the opposite direction. But while his enthusiasm never flagged, his judgment remained clear. When he became "free," he did not

bind himself to a new narrowness; he interpreted his whole experience as a call of God to stand for liberty.

One test of a man is how he can stand his own conversion.

Third Week, Seventh Day: To Rome

And when we entered into Rome, Paul was suffered to abide by himself with the soldier that guarded him. . . .

And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded the matter, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers, saying,

Go thou unto this people, and say,
By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand;
And seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive:
For this people's heart is waxed gross,
And their ears are dull of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed;
Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And should turn again,
And I should heal them.

Be it known therefore unto you, that this salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles: they will also hear.—Acts 28: 16, 23-28.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

No book presents the career of the first Christian missionary more vividly than does "A Life at Its Best," by Richard Henry Edwards and Ethel Cutler. With this one may well read "St. Paul the Hero," by Rufus Jones. Though the latter was written for young people, it will be found interesting to men and women of any age.

CHAPTER IV

The Patriot Priest

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

When Moses led the people out of Egypt they were a nation of slaves. Only the strong hand of their captain held them to their purpose and they never ceased to murmur against him. The long experience in the desert hardened them and these Hebrew tribesmen entered Palestine a solid band of warriors. As soon as they gained a foothold in the land, the tribes separated; some went far to the north and others spread over the rocky plateau to the south. Very soon they lost all national solidarity and there was left no vestige of central authority.

After a hundred years they were still in this state of disunion. In times of special peril, heroes like Barak, Deborah, Gideon, and Samson came to the front by virtue of their energy. They beat back the foes of the moment—the Canaanite tribes, the wandering Midianite robbers, the raiding Philistines; but their authority passed as soon as their specific work was done and they left behind no stable government. Of these enemies the most dangerous were the persistent Philistines. Others came and went, but they never failed. On the sea-coast were the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath; these were the strongholds of the Philistine League. Throughout the long history of Israel, the Philistines kept their place; beaten back again and again, they were always ready to advance once more when the opportunity offered. It was not until the time of the Maccabees that the children of Israel gained a port on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

The danger from the Canaanites, who were in possession of the land when the Israelites crossed the Jordan near

Jericho, lay rather in their friendship than in their enmity. Certain sections of the country were still held by Canaanites; they fraternized with the Hebrews whenever occasion offered and there was much intermarrying. They were an agricultural people and the newcomers from the desert, whose only occupation was sheep-herding, had much to learn from the more highly civilized inhabitants of Palestine. Along with other things it was easy to absorb the religious ideas of the Canaanites. Their base worship, with its frank idolatry and obscene rites, insinuated itself into the lives of the people. The leaders of the tribes feared this propaganda even more than open warfare. To them it seemed clear that the tribes of Israel must keep both their religion and their independence to make either one or the other secure. Jehovah was the God of Israel. If Israel were wiped out, Jehovah would have no people; if Jehovah were forgotten, then Israel would vanish.

We should be able to understand the situation perfectly; because, even though the cases are not parallel in every respect, the states in America repeated the same mistake a hundred years ago. There is no lesson so hard to learn as that national solidarity and security must be paid for. The smaller groups are always selfish and no task is so difficult as to make them see that one cannot retain all the advantages of isolation and gain all the advantages of cooperative life. The presence of a great danger threatening all, forces a kind of coherence; but this is liable to loosen as soon as the danger is removed. It takes constructive statesmanship of the highest order to bring about the desired result. We know well what the United States of America went through before real union was achieved late in the nineteenth century.

II

This was the situation that lay before the young Samuel as he grew up in the sanctuary at Shiloh. He was living where he could hear news from all quarters and must have been thoroughly alive to every element of danger. And suddenly the hidden danger came fully into the light. The Philistines determined on a great stroke. They collected a large army and advanced against the hills commanding the plain of Esdraelon, which lay precisely between the northern and southern groups of tribes. The Israelites in the final battle

brought the Ark of the Covenant from Shiloh; at Aphek, they suffered a culminating disaster, losing many thousands of their men and the Ark itself. The Philistines overran the land, placed garrisons everywhere, and destroyed the central sanctuary at Shiloh. Thus a large part of Israel fell under the yoke of the Philistine League.

A series of internal disasters that befell the Philistines were attributed to the presence of the Ark of the Covenant, so it was finally returned to the Hebrews. The wise statesman now saw his path clearly before him. Without hesitation he assumed command and, like the judges before him, gained the ascendancy by the authority of his personality and his message. He called an assembly of the tribes at Mizpah.

III

The two-fold task of Samuel corresponded to the two-fold danger of Israel. A religious revival and a movement toward national union were both necessary.

At the first great assembly, Samuel struck the religious note and called upon the people to put away their strange gods and turn again to Jehovah. It is recorded that the new bond was tested at once. The Philistines marched upon the very assembly, but the roused Israelites administered a sharp defeat. Besides using his own influence to the full, Samuel encouraged the order of prophets, called *Nebiim,* and stimulated their patriotic efforts. These men were assembled in schools at different shrines and were impressed with the high duty of preaching to the people the essential truths of Moses. That these zealots often acted under the influence of excited trances is quite true; but their influence was on the side of the true faith, and their very earnest wildness was calculated to arouse an indifferent people to the seriousness of the occasion.

No doubt Samuel, as he turned to Moses for his model of the true statesman, hoped for a union of Israel under Jehovah as king, with himself in the place of Moses. "Theocracy" was the ideal form of government. It identified absolutely the religious and political revival, it accomplished the two-fold task at one stroke. But it became clear that this would not do; the political union was impossible without the heroic figure of a great military leader, or king, who kept his people

by the force of his arms. So with care Samuel performed the second part of his vocation and chose Saul as the first king of Israel.

The preparation of Samuel began when his mother dedicated him to the service of Jehovah. His character was developed under influences best calculated to impress him with the needs of his country. As these needs grew more desperate, his own duty became clearer. The great opportunity came and he was ready for it.

DAILY READINGS

Fourth Week, First Day: A Mother's Son

So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest was sitting upon his seat by the doorpost of the temple of Jehovah. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto Jehovah, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Jehovah of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thy handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thy handmaid, but wilt give unto thy handmaid a manchild, then I will give him unto Jehovah all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. . . .

And they slew the bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, Oh, my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto Jehovah. For this child I prayed; and Jehovah hath given me my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I have granted him to Jehovah; as long as he liveth he is granted to Jehovah. And he worshipped Jehovah there.—I Sam. 1: 9-11, 25-28.

The motive of Hannah seems to be simply that of gratitude, but we shall surely not be straining the truth if we attribute to her the same aspirations as have swayed all mothers throughout the history of the world. Like the rest, she wanted her son to do something worth while; and to a devout woman, nothing would be more worth while than service at the sanctuary. And Shiloh, the center of religion and of patriotism, was surely the point of power.

Nowadays we are beginning to feel that no one—not even a parent—has the right to determine the career of another. Does this mean that parents cannot dedicate their children to

the service of God? How might such a dedication be worked out without violence to a growing personality?

What should be our attitude toward the wishes of others for us?

Fourth Week, Second Day: He That Hath Ears

And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place (now his eyes had begun to wax dim, so that he could not see), and the lamp of God was not yet gone out, and Samuel was laid down to sleep, in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God was; that Jehovah called Samuel: and he said, Here am I. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. And Jehovah called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And he answered, I called not, my son; lie down again. Now Samuel did not yet know Jehovah, neither was the word of Jehovah yet revealed unto him. And Jehovah called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I; for thou calledst me. And Eli perceived that Jehovah had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, Jehovah; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And Jehovah came, and stood, and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel said, Speak; for thy servant heareth.—I Sam. 3: 2-10.

This is one of the most graceful stories ever written down by the hand of man. The writer tells us that Jehovah did not speak to many in those days. How could he? There were very few who could hear his voice in that scattered and disheartened nation. We have dwelt previously on some of the simple means used by God to speak to men; here it might well be remembered that it takes an acute ear to hear God's voice and to understand His accents.

Why did the word of Jehovah come to Samuel?

Fourth Week, Third Day: Accepted

And Samuel grew, and Jehovah was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel

from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of Jehovah. And Jehovah appeared again in Shiloh; for Jehovah revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Jehovah. And the word of Saul came to all Israel.—1 Sam. 3: 19-4: 1a.

The preparation of the prophet was thus completed. In his case the dedication of the mother was accepted by the son and the line of his life was established. These years, of course, were the period of preparation; Samuel probably had no idea of what was before him, but he was sensitive to the "word of Jehovah" and when it came he was not likely to miss it.

What was the final proof of Samuel's success?

Fourth Week, Fourth Day: The Opportunity and the Man

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of Jehovah, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of Jehovah. And it came to pass, from the day that the ark abode in Kiriath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after Jehovah.

And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away the Baalim and the Ashtaroth, and served Jehovah only.—I Sam. 7: 1-4.

The period of depression after the disaster of Aphek is broken by the return of the Ark of the Covenant. The loss of the Ark meant national dishonor; its return opened up the first possibility of renewed self-respect. What an opportunity! It is as if a French statesman were permitted to address his countrymen after the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine. The great leader blows the spark of hope into a blaze, at the same time sternly calling the people to account for their sins.

How did Samuel interpret the loss of the Ark?

Fourth Week, Fifth Day: United We Stand

And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray for you unto Jehovah. And they gathered together to Mizpah, and drew water, and poured it out before Jehovah, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against Jehovah. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpah. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto Jehovah our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a whole burnt-offering unto Jehovah: and Samuel cried unto Jehovah for Israel; and Jehovah answered him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but Jehovah thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten down before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpah, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car.—I Sam. 7: 5-11.

The immediate result of Samuel's appeal at the critical moment is that a new spirit is engendered in the people and they offer a determined resistance to the Philistines. What a range of possibilities is opened when the moment of crisis occurs!

Fourth Week, Sixth Day: A Careful Choice

And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the guest-chamber, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, who were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. And the cook took up the thigh, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold, that which hath been reserved! set it before thee and eat; because unto the appointed time hath it been kept for thee, for I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.

And when they were come down from the high place into the city, he communed with Saul upon the housetop. And they arose early: and it came to pass about the

spring of the day, that Samuel called to Saul on the housetop, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. As they were going down at the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us (and he passed on), but stand thou still first, that I may cause thee to hear the word of God.

Then Samuel took the vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?—I Sam. 9: 22–10: 1.

Since the people demanded a king, Samuel was determined he should be the right one. Notice that Samuel anointed Saul after "he communed with Saul upon the housetop"; and even then did not make any final decision until, as the saying goes, he had "slept on it." An essential phase of Samuel's vocation was the committing of part of his task to another man—a test alike of character and judgment.

When such an act is necessary for us, do we want the other man to fail or to succeed?

Fourth Week, Seventh Day: Long Live the King

And Samuel called the people together unto Jehovah to Mizpah; and he said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all the kingdoms that oppressed you: but ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saveth you out of all your calamities and your distresses; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before Jehovah by your tribes, and by your thousands. So Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. And he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by their families; and the family of the Matrites was taken; and Saul the son of Kish was taken: but when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they asked of Jehovah further, Is there yet a man to come hither? And Jehovah answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage. And they ran and fetched him thence; and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom Jehovah hath chosen, that there is none like

him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, Long live the king.—I Sam. 10. 17-24.

The final shout clinches the matter. Though Samuel was probably disappointed, yet his duty was clear; and it did come out well in the end. Saul, of course, developed weakness of character that was finally his undoing; but he did perform a very great service for Israel. He began the process of union, and his own heroic figure was the rallying point. His failure has been so emphasized that we are likely to forget his successes.

To what extent had Samuel really fulfilled the "word of Jehovah" to him?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The story has been presented in a most incomplete form owing to necessity for condensation. A reading of the many interesting passages omitted here and a careful study of the comments in Kent's "Historical Bible" will fill out the outlines and enable the student to appreciate the extent of Israel's debt to Samuel.

CHAPTER V

The Battle of Middle Life

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Jacob's great choice was met in middle life. Only then did he come face to face with his destiny.

His start in life was wrong—hopelessly wrong. The tricks that he played on his elder brother and his old blind father were not marks of cleverness but of meanness and craft. Unfortunately it appears that his mother backed him up in his shady proceedings: perhaps he had wheedled his way into her good graces by some underhand scheme. There is no promise in a beginning like this.

It is little wonder that the bold and impetuous Esau hated the tricky brother who had wronged him so deeply. Deeper than the loss of the birthright was the missing of his father's blessing, which was considered to carry a special virtue to the son upon whom it was bestowed. So it was that he planned to put Jacob out of the way once and for all. There was nothing left for Jacob but flight; so he started out for the land of Haran, whence his grandfather Abraham had come, to try his fortune with his mother's brother Laban.

The dream of Jacob may be taken as representing God's response to the wanderer separated from home and friends on his way to an unknown land. We can see in the vow that he made next morning that Jacob considered that the only successful outcome of his life would be a safe return to the home of his birth. The promise of God was welcome to him then—"Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again unto this land." The fulfilment of that promise seemed far away, but Jacob had surely learned the first great lesson of his life.

II

The welcome that Laban gave Jacob left nothing to be de-

sired for warm cordiality. Laban protested that Jacob and he were one in bone and flesh, and Jacob is comforted with the assurance that Laban will, indeed, pay him wages for his work. So it is with the prize of Rachel before him that Jacob settles down.

In the famous duel of wits that now transpires, Jacob is compelled to swallow a very large-sized dose of his own medicine. We are hardly able to judge the relative weight of his disappointment; yet it seems to us that, in the first engagement, Jacob was paid in full for all he had done to Esau. But now with courage and energy he settles down to his second service of seven years which wins him the wife of his heart at the end.

From then on it was a case of diamond cut diamond, and when at last Jacob turned toward home with his large family and his flocks, the honors in the contest surely rested with him. We are not called upon to condone this trickery back and forth; but we can realize that Jacob had developed energy and ambition, that he had really a tribe of his own, that he had become a man of consequence. He felt that now he might safely return to the land of his birth and take up the life for which he longed and fulfill the destiny to which he was called. It was necessary for him to steal away in Laban's absence. Laban's discovery of the flight, his hasty pursuit, and the final contest between the two, in which Jacob is now aided by Rachel, form a fitting close to the relations between these men. There seems to be every reason to believe that Jacob's longing to return to his home land must have been greatly strengthened by his desire to be quit of Laban once and for all.

III

Then, not only the scene but also the very atmosphere of this fascinating story changes completely. Back in Haran is left all the deceit and trickery, and the great crisis of Jacob's life is introduced with a startling clearness.

Esau is on the warpath. He has not forgiven his brother. Jacob's early sins rise up to greet him just at the moment when he is ready to seize the prize of his years of strenuous effort. If the past cannot be blotted out, all his effort is in vain; for it is nothing to him now to have won all these things, if he cannot return to the land of the promise and

ere establish his name and race. There is no question of his ar, there is just as little question that he means to go ahead nd settle the matter once and for all. The storm may over- helm him, but he carries all his sail right into its teeth.

The night before the day which is to decide his fortunes, ey come to the ford Jabbok. His flocks and herds have gone efore him. Now he sends his household across, and last his vo wives. Like many another since the beginning of the orld, he has chosen to fight out his great fight alone.

Whatever be the full significance of the struggle through e long hours, of one thing we are sure: Jacob came to the alization that he was powerless to meet his fate alone. hose words: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," e the language of the man who has run against the hardest sk of his life with a full realization of his own wrongdoing nd his own powerlessness. In the character of Jacob are ombined the strength and the weakness of the Oriental, but eeper than all is the Hebrew sense of the reality of God, a od of purpose and a God of righteousness. Some author- ties hint that the name "Israel" which he received as the out- ome of this struggle means "He who perseveres with God." acob, "the Supplanter," wins through by ambition and cour- age, first persevering with man and then persevering with God.

This story is so vivid as a parable that it needs no comment. The experience may be translated into modern terms with the greatest ease. Somehow or other we feel that we can under- stand Jacob; and it is interesting, indeed, that the name borne by the Hebrew race down through the long centuries is not that of the noble and far-sighted Abraham, or of the plain and patient Isaac, but the name of one who though weak with all the weakness of humanity, yet had in him that faith in God, that persistent ambition which made a sturdy and long-lived people proud to be called the children of Israel.

DAILY READINGS

The following selections from the story of Jacob are given without daily comment. Such comment could only detract from this human narrative.

Fifth Week, First Day: The Birthright

And Isaac entreated Jehovah for his wife, because she

was barren: and Jehovah was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. . . . And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

And the boys grew: and Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Now Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob boiled pottage: and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me first thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me first; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: so Esau despised his birthright.—Gen. 25: 21, 24-34.

Fifth Week, Second Day: The Stolen Blessing

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his elder son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me venison; and make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savory food, that I may eat, and bless thee before Jehovah before my death. . . .

And Rebekah took the goodly garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son. . . .

And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob

aid unto his father, I am Esau thy first-born; I have one according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit nd eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me. And saac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it o quickly, my son? And he said, Because Jehovah thy od sent me good speed. And Isaac said unto Jacob, ome near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and aid, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the ands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his ands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he lessed him.—Gen. 27: 1-7, 15, 18-23.

Fifth Week, Third Day: The Wronged Brother

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also made savory food, and brought it unto his father; and he said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who then is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceeding great and bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. . . .

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. And the words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah; and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran. —Gen. 27: 30-34, 41-43.

Fifth Week, Fourth Day: The Covenant

And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took one

of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed; and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of the city was Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, and Jehovah will be my God, then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.—Gen. 28: 10-22.

Fifth Week, Fifth Day: Jacob's Sin Finds Him Out

And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the field of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye say unto my lord Esau: Thus saith thy servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now: and I have oxen, and asses, and flocks, and men-servants, and maid-servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and moreover he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and was distressed:

and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and the herds, and the camels, into two companies; and he said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the company which is left shall escape. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, O Jehovah, who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will do thee good: I am not worthy of the least of all the lovingkindnesses, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two companies. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.—Gen. 32: 22-30.

Fifth Week, Sixth Day: The Ford Jabbok

And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two handmaids, and his eleven children, and passed over the ford of the Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the stream, and sent over that which he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.—Gen. 32: 22-30.

Fifth Week, Seventh Day: Victory and Thanksgiving

And Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram; and encamped before the city. And he bought the

parcel of ground, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for a hundred pieces of money. And he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel.—Gen. 33: 18-20.

To what extent does our experience resemble Jacob's?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The whole story of Jacob should be read at one sitting. Many of us have scarcely glanced at it since we were children. Those who go back to it find the same refreshing experience as happens when we pick up "Robinson Crusoe" or "The Old Curiosity Shop" after many years. Everything that was half-comprehended before comes out in the light of our maturer experience. The same is true of many other passages in Genesis.

CHAPTER VI

The Messenger of Fate

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

We have suggested that the prophet Isaiah was ideally fitted for his task because of his intimate knowledge of life in Jerusalem. Paul, by the unanimous voice of Christendom, was able to appeal so strongly to Gentiles because he knew them so well. How then can we hint that the shepherd Amos, tending his little deformed sheep and nursing the poor fruit of desert fig-trees in the wilderness of Judea, was undergoing the proper preparation for the career of a reformer of the Kingdom of Israel? His home, Tekoa, was a dreary place, his daily business was conducted in almost complete isolation, his only objects of study were the trees and sheep. If God really called Amos from the hills to set straight the priest Amaziah and King Jeroboam of Israel, we seem to have a perfect example of an unnatural and unreasonable summons.

II

The first question to ask ourselves is, What does a great thinker learn as he ponders in solitude on the experiences of his life and the information about people and events that he receives from others? Superficial observers have an easy way of telling us that only in isolation can world-shaking ideas be wrought out. This is all very poetic, but unfortunately quite wrong. Some of the most enlightening visions of men have come out of the noise and confusion of busy lives. The point is that the dweller in the desert develops powers different in range and quality; he becomes fitted for an individual mission.

Far away from distractions, the mind works slowly and calmly, patiently piecing together the results of experience

till one by one things fall into their right relation to one another. The soldier in the trench has to get a newspaper to find out how the war is going on. We all live so close to our daily business that it covers the whole sky. The critic must step back from a picture to see it as a whole. Our personal experiences are so vivid to us that we think they are the central facts in human life. The brooding seer gains a sense of proportion, he can arrange things in the order of their value.

At the same time, there is a sharp contrast in the vision that forms in the soul of the lonely thinker. We city-dwellers, for example, have so much before us that we pass down the street gazing with the same indifference upon a theater, a church, a street-car, and an art gallery. There is a grayness in the whole panorama that we see. But objects which we can hardly distinguish from the background, to the seer stand up as "hard and high and raw" as trees at the moment of dawn in summer. In the "Epistle of Karshish," Browning puts into this letter of an Arab physician a description of Lazarus restored to life by Jesus. The physician cannot understand Lazarus' view of life: almost in exasperation he writes—

> "The man is witless of the size, the sum,
> The value in proportion of all things,
> Or whether it be little or be much."

The dangerous illness of a child, he regards with complacence,

> "While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
> At play or in the school or laid asleep,
> Will startle him to an agony of fear,
> Exasperation, just as like."

As the lonely thinker ranges things in their proper relation, the distance between them is greatly magnified. The good is very light, the evil is very black. As a general rule, tolerance is a product of life rather than of thought. When we brush elbows with those who are opposed to us, we become used to them; the prophet from the wilderness sees the difference—and he usually remarks about it.

Thus it is that these men are fitted primarily for the great mission of presenting to their fellows with striking emphasis

he eternal difference between right and wrong. Adjustment nd compromise are usually left out of their program; they ry to enhance distinctions, not to blur them. Their intoler- nce is the basis of their power: they are ever needed when a community or a nation has fallen by easy stages to the state of mind which cannot tell the darkness from the light.

For constructive work, men need intimate knowledge, sym- pathy, and a certain power of accommodation. But very often we cannot build till the ground is cleared, and the only instru- ment that can sweep away the rotten growths on stagnant lives is the burning, uncompromising conviction of the destructive prophet.

III

The kingdom built up by the strenuous labors of David became divided after Solomon's death. Judah to the south was concentrated on the rocky plateau where Jerusalem stood. Israel to the north reached the plain of Esdraelon and was in contact with the highway that led from the Euphrates through Damascus, then down the coast to Egypt. Though Amos lived near Jerusalem, it was the kingdom of Israel that attracted his attention. He probably journeyed to Bethel to sell his wool. There he saw and heard the things over which he mulled as he cared for his flocks in the wilderness. That wilderness of Judea is sacred ground; for out of it came John the Baptist, and there Jesus fought out his forty-day struggle with the powers of death.

Israel had been under the power of Syria, centered in Damascus; but the rising tide of Assyria was sweeping on Syria from the east. So Joash took advantage of the situation to attack the oppressor; and by Amos's time, Jeroboam II, Joash's successor, had established Israel in power and security. But prosperity had brought all its attendant evils. There arose a class of wealthy nobles who robbed the poor and lived in luxury on their ill-gotten gains. The women pressed their husbands for more and yet more, careless of the fact that the people were being driven by poverty into slavery. Bribery, dishonest trading, false weights, worthless goods—these were commonplaces of the market. Redress was impossible, for the courts had fallen into a state of desperate corruption. And worst of all, the priests, blind leaders of blind, were winking

at the sins of the nation and imagining their duty well done as long as they maintained the services of the sanctuaries.

All this Amos saw—this was the food of his lonely meditation.

IV

What was he to do about it? After all, was it any of his business? He was neither a prophet, nor a member of any school of prophets. Such questions surely came to him. The impulse of God himself was more powerful than his own hesitation; he had witnessed all the wrong and he had come to see in it the sure promise of doom. Therefore, he must sound the terrible warning.

His decision taken, he went forward to Bethel; and there, before the royal palace and the sanctuary, he delivered the message that came to him in the wilderness. He may have been an unlettered shepherd, but he knew what he meant and he put what he meant into words that could not be mistaken. The priest, Amaziah, raises a howl of treason, whereupon he draws the fire of the prophet upon his own head. The whole rotten system is exposed with a fluency and point that has rarely been paralleled in history. Every element of evil is handled with a perfect faithfulness. All is summed up in the moving reproach that these people who owe everything to Jehovah have turned their backs upon their gracious God.

His message delivered, the prophet passes from the scene and we see him no more.

DAILY READINGS

Sixth Week, First Day: The Question for Israel

Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities. Shall two walk together, except they have agreed? Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is set for him? shall a snare spring up from the ground, and have taken nothing at all? Shall the trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? shall evil befall a city,

and Jehovah hath not done it? Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets. The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?

Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are therein, and what oppressions in the midst thereof. For they know not to do right, saith Jehovah, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: An adversary there shall be, even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be plundered. Thus saith Jehovah: As the shepherd rescueth out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be rescued that sit in Samaria in the corner of a couch, and on the silken cushions of a bed.

Hear ye, and testify against the house of Jacob, saith the Lord Jehovah, the God of hosts. For in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith Jehovah.—Amos 3: 1-15.

This is not the slow building-up of elaborate argument. The messenger has a message simple and unadorned. The tone is that of authority and the proof of the authority is the conviction that it carries.

The analysis of the situation is the product of observation and reasoning; the note of authority comes from deep within. Men do not listen patiently to a chain of reasoning; what they understand best is the conviction of one who is dead in earnest, spoken without doubt or hesitation.

How do prophets come to their sure conviction?

Sixth Week, Second Day: The Parasites

Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, that oppress the poor, that crush the needy, that say unto their lords, Bring, and let us drink. The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your residue with fish-hooks.

And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her; and ye shall cast yourselves into Harmon, saith Jehovah.—Amos 4: 1-3.

The women are here accused of the same deadly sin with which Isaiah charged the nobles in Jerusalem. Their demands of their men were for more and yet more—no matter how it was secured. We cannot lay this indictment upon women alone; it is the fault of the parasite class, wherever they are and whoever they be. Such are not content with accepting what is brought them, for the life they lead encourages them to increase their demands in utter carelessness as to who must suffer to secure them their desires.

The punishment is an Oriental picture. "Ye shall go out at the breaches."

The city has been taken. The torment of hunger and of thirst has been endured to the end, but the enemy has torn a great hole in the wall and entered over the bodies of the defenders. Through the streets the butchers strike right and left. Then there begins a long procession which passes out through the breach in the walls; it is the women marching away to slavery. Suffering there has been, there is pain in abundance before them as they are driven over the long miles to the home of the conquerors. This is the contrast they must face.

Sixth Week, Third Day: Judgment as Well as Mercy

Come to Beth-el, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days; and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened, and proclaim freewill-offerings and publish them: for this pleaseth you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah. And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. And I also have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, and were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: the multitude of your gardens

and your vineyards and your fig-trees and your olive-trees hath the palmer-worm devoured: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have carried away your horses; and I have made the stench of your camp to come up even into your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah. I have overthrown cities among you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.—Amos 4: 4-12.

The never-ending taunt of the prophets is directed as usual against the solemn ceremonies carried out by men with impure hearts and unclean hands. It is the pleasant and easy way out of any possible danger from heaven.

But Jehovah is a God who judges, adds the messenger. No doubt if we were writing this passage, we should tone it down a good deal. We are accustomed to dwell on the love of God, thinking of such love as the inspirer of pleasant gifts.

Have the nations profited by the warning?

Do we any of us understand the significance of God's judgment?

Sixth Week, Fourth Day: Justice

Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and it devour, and there be none to quench it in Beth-el. Ye who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth, seek him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night; that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth (Jehovah is his name); that bringeth sudden destruction upon the strong, so that destruction cometh upon the fortress.

They hate him that reproveth in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink the wine thereof. For I know how

manifold are your transgressions, and how mighty are your sins—ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe, and that turn aside the needy in the gate from their right. Therefore he that is prudent shall keep silence in such a time; for it is an evil time.

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate: it may be that Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.—Amos 5: 6-15.

What is justice?

Sixth Week, Fifth Day: The Plumb-line

Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, he formed locusts in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. And it came to pass that, when they made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord Jehovah, forgive, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small. Jehovah repented concerning this: It shall not be, saith Jehovah.

Thus the Lord Jehovah showed me: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah called to contend by fire; and it devoured the great deep, and would have eaten up the land. Then said I, O Lord Jehovah, cease, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small. Jehovah repented concerning this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord Jehovah.

Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood beside a wall made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. And Jehovah said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more; and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.—Amos 7: 1-9.

The plumb-line is the symbol of doom. The reference is natural enough. A wall that was properly constructed has sagged. The extent of the danger cannot be appreciated until a plumb-line is held by the wall. With the line in place, it is easy to see that the wall is near its fall.

The wide application of this lesson is simple enough.

How can we tell when a nation sags?
How can we tell when a man sags?

Sixth Week, Sixth Day: Patriotism

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house.

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. Now therefore hear thou the word of Jehovah: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac; therefore thus saith Jehovah: Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou thyself shalt die in a land that is unclean, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of his land. —Amos 7: 10-17.

The priest of Bethel raises the cry of treason. It does not matter whether the prophet is right or not; he is criticizing, therefore he is unpatriotic—a traitor.

This question is a very real one for us in America to-day. Those who are guiding national affairs in wartime, the soldier enduring the hardship and danger of battle, the father or mother with a son in the front-line trenches—all these feel keenly that the least the rest of the people can do is to give their full support without comment. This point of view commands our deepest sympathy, for the motive is certainly right. The aim of the nation is not a question for discussion—we must win. And all secret whisperings are sedition—loathsome, deplorable sedition.

But is there not a place always for honest, open criticism? Has it not, too, a distinct place in winning the war?

Sixth Week, Seventh Day: The Doom

I saw the Lord standing beside the altar: and he said, Smite the capitals, that the thresholds may shake; and break them in pieces on the head of all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: there shall not one of them flee away, and there shall not one of them escape. Though they dig into Sheol, thence shall my hand take them; and though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and it shall bite them. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

For the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, is he that toucheth the land and it melteth, and all that dwell therein shall mourn; and it shall rise up wholly like the River, and shall sink again, like the River of Egypt; it is he that buildeth his chambers in the heavens, and hath founded his vault upon the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth; Jehovah is his name.—Amos 9: 1-6.

Amos is the preacher of doom. His book closes with a ray of hope, but it is very dim in comparison with the rest of his words. It sounds so unlike him that many scholars are convinced that the happier promises were added by another writer who felt the need of toning down the awful condemnation. However, through all the terrible indictment there is an undertone quite consistent with the ray of hope. Israel is regarded as Jehovah's nation. They have failed in their duty and will be terribly punished, but nevertheless Jehovah is their God.

The message of the prophet is missed if we overemphasize the hope. Amos wanted the people to see and appreciate the wrongs they were committing every day. He would not tell them that Jehovah would bring everything out all right no matter what they did. The old covenant between God and Israel was explicit. Jehovah was to be Israel's God, *if Israel remained faithful to Jehovah.* There were two sides to that bargain.

In less than forty years after Amos issued his tremendous warning the Assyrian army appeared before Samaria, the

chief city of Israel. After a siege of three years, the city fell into the hands of Sargon, king of Assyria, and "out at the wreaches" marched thirty thousand people who were driven across to the valley of the Euphrates. The northern kingdom of Israel ended then and there.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In the "Century Bible," the comment on the book of Amos is from the hand of Dr. Robert F. Horton. This is admirable material for a closer study of this extraordinary man.

CHAPTER VII

The Testing of a King

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

In the face of great responsibility certain men have displayed unimagined qualities of vigor and constancy. But opportunity is the revealer alike of strength and of weakness. Saul, the first king of Israel, seemed ideally fitted to rally the scattered tribes of the nation. He embodied military energy and faith in Jehovah, and his commanding presence made the people proud of him. Moreover, he accomplished a great deal. The huge success of the monarch who succeeded to his throne has obscured Saul's real achievements. He did bring the people together. He did repel the Philistines. He did establish a firm central government. And, most praiseworthy of all, he set an example of simplicity and severity of life that David might have followed with great profit to the nation. But there were deep seams of weakness in Saul's character. Jealousy seems to have had such a hold upon him that it aggravated him into emotional fits. He was carried this way and that by his impulses, and his insensate rashness brought him to the verge of ruin more than once. It is suggested that all this was due to physical causes; but there is possibly more truth in the comment that the moral weakness and excesses caused the physical ailments, or at least aggravated them greatly. Samuel, who had chosen Saul as the very representative of Jehovah, was obviously uneasy at the progress of events.

While Saul was attempting to consolidate his position, David was an inmate of the court. He was commended both as a gallant warrior and a skilful musician. From the fact that he tried on Saul's harness we know that he was a noble and kingly figure, and the record of his exploits indicates unmistakably great personal attractiveness. Further, he was a

lose friend of Saul's son Jonathan, the most gallant knight of Hebrew history. Saul made a practice of enlisting for his army brave young men from all the tribes. There is no reason to suppose that David had the slightest idea of undermining Saul's position. In fact, later events emphasize David's complete loyalty to the king. But Saul was disposed to jealousy, and surely David was an appropriate object. David's marriage into Saul's family naturally increased rather than allayed the king's uneasiness.

So it was that Saul resorted to the mean expedient of assassination. That he was frustrated by his own children could have added little to his peace of mind.

II

David's position as he fled in haste from Saul's court was a challenge to every power of the man. In those violent days, which we are better able to understand in war-time than we were formerly, both skill in arms and high diplomatic ability were necessary to keep one who was under the displeasure of the great. The records show that careless disregard of human life and widespread treachery were the order of the day. Men slept with their swords in their hands.

Human interest in David's romantic exploits will never fail. It is not our purpose to recount them here. Rather we are concerned with characteristics of the man as they emerge in the long and severe testing to which he was subjected. His preparation in the court of Saul had evidently brought to him an appreciation of the mission of Israel as conceived by Samuel and by Saul, and also a clear conception of the stage of development that had been achieved through the efforts of Saul. The relative power and importance of the enemies that ringed the nation was surely well known to one of the chosen warriors of the king. From both the prophets and priests, especially from Samuel, the young David must have absorbed a reverence for the religion of Jehovah and an understanding of its duties.

III

There is one aspect of the career of David that stands out in startling relief against the dark background of slaughter and treachery.

The old saying that a man is known by his companions finds many interesting embodiments in real life. To all of us are known men of seemingly ordinary attainments who have everywhere friends of the noblest character and most striking personality. When the successes of men are listed and weighed in the balance, one wonders what can be placed above this achievement of commanding the consideration and love of strong men and women. It is all the more striking because it is not an end to be strived for. Actively to cultivate such relationships is not only the finest way of missing the end sought, but an absolute demonstration of personal unfitness for the great prize. For the winning of friendship is concerned with being rather than with doing.

In a Canadian city not many years ago, men watched with interest a long funeral train made of many of the noblest and best from all departments of the city's life. So striking was the gathering that the spectators were puzzled. No mention had been made in the newspapers of the loss of any of the city's leaders. Who, then, could it be? Perhaps, some obscure hero who had performed some signal service unknown before. No, it was neither a man of fame nor a hero. It was just a boy who had been cut off, under circumstances of pathetic tragedy, at the threshold of manhood. And no one in the sad procession knew exactly why the other was there; they were all gathered in by the mysterious power of a simple and true personality, who had drawn friends to himself with an unconscious compulsion that made nothing of time or space or human circumstances. Little wonder that men stood in amazement and awe beside that grave. What more could three score years and ten have given such a one?

It was not the fame of either of them that drew David and Jonathan together. Circumstances did not favor such a companionship; for if Saul was jealous of David as a possible supplanter, should not Saul's son and heir be doubly so? The historian has laid himself out to show the courage and wisdom and purity of Jonathan. He has not concealed any of David's weaknesses, but he has not breathed a word against his friend. That David was the object of deepest devotion on the part of this heroic and fine-spirited son of Saul, is an eternal witness of the central integrity of David's character. Those who later gathered around David were not all the fine flower of manhood; he must have looked askance at some of the ruffians

who collected in the Cave of Adullam. Later alliances, too, brought him into contact with some very questionable gentry. But in the hours of depression there surely rose before him a single figure. He saw a bold adventurer, with his armor-bearer as his only support, climb painfully up the steep hill at Michmash in the face of scornful enemies, to ram their taunts down their throats with his own sword; he saw a daring prince stand between himself and the king's rage, giving not one inch at the insane fury of the monarch; he saw an unflinching warrior on the slopes of Gilboa, calm and erect till the tide of everwhelming odds blotted him out. So David might have mused: "That was a man, and he loved me."

IV

If any of those who followed the fortunes of David the outlaw had known that he surely would be David the king, they would have thanked Jehovah for choosing such a resourceful leader. Though Saul's enmity shut him out from the central tribes, he made friends where he could and certainly avoided needlessly antagonizing anyone.

The part he was called upon to play when he finally allied himself with the Philistine king of Gath, Achish, and took up the settlement assigned to him at Ziklag, was not an easy one. It was a deep sagacity that prompted David to accept Saul's apology gracefully but at the same time to keep out of the reach of the moody king. The temporary alliance with the Philistines seemed to be the only way to keep from being crushed between the upper and nether millstones. The methods he employed to keep on good terms with Achish and yet avoid trouble with Israel are not to be recommended on ethical grounds, but we cannot close our eyes to the fact that they combined caution and boldness in just the proper proportions. Manzoni said of Count Cavour that he had "all the prudence and all the imprudence of the true statesman." Well might the Israelite who saw Saul decrease and David increase regard the process as a part of the divine rescue of Israel; for while rashness and self-will were driving Saul along an aimless course, David was steering with firm resolution, with a hand on the helm sensitive to every cross-current in the channel. National consolidation and progress always depend upon a series of legitimate compromises.

V

David showed no desire to hurry the course of events. Even though he was driven out by Saul, there is nothing in the record to indicate that he felt any personal resentment. He made no attempt on Saul's life; indeed, Saul was twice in his power, but he held his hand from "Jehovah's Anointed." We do not discover that he ever tried to foment a revolution; nor, even when he was closely allied with the Philistines, did he use the enemies of Israel as an instrument of revenge against Saul. He used the spoils of war, moreover, to win the friendship of towns within the tribe of Judah.

It seems to have been David's persistent policy to strengthen himself without in any way weakening the kingdom over which Saul reigned. We may explain this in several ways—all of which can only be conjectures. To say that the policy showed a lack of personal ambition might draw the retort that it indicated the height of self-seeking: who would ruin a kingdom over which he was determined to reign? But we are by no means sure that David had determined to take Saul's throne. Was not Jonathan still alive? The more just estimate of his motive would seem to be that he took it to be his sacred duty to maintain the integrity of the nation from which he was banished, acting all the time in the hope that a turn of the wheel would permit him again to unite his fortunes to those of his own people.

Jehovah was the God of Israel and David was Jehovah's servant. We do not find him dealing with alien deities. Had he done so, our realistic historian would no doubt have written it out in his book with absolute complacency. Such consistent loyalty to the God of his fathers would hold the confidence of those of his followers who were of the blood of Israel, and command at least the respect of all the others. It is significant, indeed, that those who were with him in exile seemed to have remained by his side through the years to come. The total impression made upon us by David is that he did appreciate Israel's "true mission and function in history" and regarded her success as more important than his own. On any other hypothesis, his actions in exile are meaningless.

Policies, after all, gain their significance from the men who are dominated by them. As David was bound up in Israel, so

In a real sense Israel at its best was represented in David. He was the bold interpreter of Samuel's visions, he made the dreams come true.

One incident that happened long afterward throws a golden light on the character of this leader of men.

It is night. The great general, now David the king, stands among his men gazing across the camp of his enemies at the little village of Bethlehem, where he was born. He longs for a draught of water from the well at the gate that he knows so well. Perhaps it is that he feels there would be particular virtue in such water now as he faces his enemies, perhaps it is mere sentiment. No matter: there are three of his old comrades who hear his words; quickly they set up the enterprise among them. Shall the slightest desire of their leader go unfulfilled? Back through the night come the "mighty men" into the firelight beside the king. They hold high before him an earthen jar full to the brim with water from Bethlehem. He rises stern and tall. These were the men who had risked their lives to gratify him. They remembered the days when he was the head of a ragged band of outlaws, the scum of the country. He had led them in a hundred fights. He had brought them through perilous times to a great victory. It was his right to have the water: let him drink.

Can we wonder at the power he held over brave and upstanding men? He accepts the gift—not for himself, never: devotion like theirs belongs not to him, but to the cause. With kindling hearts and moist eyes, they watch him pour out their service as an offering that God alone is worthy to accept.

VI

The disaster that falls upon Saul on the slopes of Mount Gilboa brings final ruin upon Saul's house. The king lived to see his three sons, among them Jonathan, die nobly in the front of the battle before he perished miserably by his own hand. Abner's attempt to revive the dynasty by the elevation of another son of Saul to the vacant throne is doomed at the start. There is left one only who is fit to lead Israel now. He has been tested in every way, and he rings true.

Resolute in battle, skilful in diplomacy, true in the faith, the "many-sided David" takes command. He gathers all the tribes together. He pushes the Empire down to the Red Sea

and up to Damascus, he forces the Philistine back into his coast cities, he drives the wandering robbers into the desert. And long afterward, whenever the disheartened children of Israel would "remember better things," they turned their eyes back to the days of David the king.

DAILY READINGS

Seventh Week, First Day: Presented at Court

Now the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, that are before thee, to seek out a man who is a skilful player on the harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the young men, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valor, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person; and Jehovah is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, who is with the sheep. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armorbearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favor in my sight. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took the harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.—I Sam. 16: 14-23.

David's personal characteristics are summed up here. His qualifications for leadership were certainly such as would command attention at the court of Saul. Bold in battle, skilled in art, pleasing in appearance, careful of speech, devout in spirit—this was surely an all-round man.

Seventh Week, Second Day: The King's Displeasure

And there was war again: and David went out, and

fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled before him. And an evil spirit from Jehovah was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand; and David was playing with his hand. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the spear; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the spear into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night. And Saul sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to-night, to-morrow thou wilt be slain. So Michal let David down through the window: and he went, and fled, and escaped. And Michal took the teraphim, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair at the head thereof, and covered it with the clothes. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. And Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. And when the messengers came in, behold, the teraphim was in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at the head thereof. And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me thus, and let mine enemy go, so that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?—I Sam. 19: 8-17.

David had already been warned by Jonathan of the danger in which he stood. We find him, thus, saved by the actions of two of Saul's children.

Consider the effect of all this on the moody Saul.

Seventh Week, Third Day: The Oath of Friendship

And Jonathan said unto David, Jehovah, the God of Israel, be witness: when I have sounded my father about this time to-morrow, or the third day, behold, if there be good toward David, shall I not then send unto thee, and disclose it unto thee? Jehovah do so to Jonathan, and more also, should it please my father to do thee evil, if I disclose it not unto thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and Jehovah be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live show me the loving-kindness of Jehovah, that I die not; but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever; no, not when Jehovah hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David,

saying, And Jehovah will require it at the hand of David's enemies.

And Jonathan caused David to swear again, for the love that he had to him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Then Jonathan said unto him, To-morrow is the new moon: and thou wilt be missed, because thy seat will be empty. And when thou hast stayed three days, thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send the lad, saying, Go, find the arrows. If I say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee; take them, and come; for there is peace to thee and no hurt, as Jehovah liveth. But if I say thus unto the boy, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way; for Jehovah hath sent thee away. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, Jehovah is between thee and me for ever.—I Sam. 20: 12-23.

So the great friendship was sealed. Both men were noble and brave, both were popular with the soldiers. We may perhaps understand something of the influence of these friends on their companions when we remember how their relationship has been the inspiration of thousands who have only read of them in the Book.

No doubt Portia was highly pleased with herself when she said to Nerissa:

> "That light we see is burning in my hall.
> How far the little candle throws its beams!
> So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

This friendship of David and Jonathan is such a good deed, for it shines against a terrible background. It is the same in Europe to-day. Against the dark sky we see the shining figures of men who stand by each other to the death: but for the dark sky they might be lost to our sight.

True friendship irradiates the whole round of our social life.

Seventh Week, Fourth Day: The Anointed of Jehovah

Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hit-

tite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee. So David and Abishai came to the people by night: and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the place of the wagons, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people lay round about him. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered up thine enemy into thy hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear to the earth at one stroke, and I will not smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not; for who can put forth his hand against Jehovah's anointed, and be guiltless? And David said, As Jehovah liveth, Jehovah will smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle, and perish. Jehovah forbid that I should put forth my hand against Jehovah's anointed: but now take, I pray thee, the spear that is at his head, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's head; and they gat them away: and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from Jehovah was fallen upon them.

Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of the mountain afar off; a great space being between them; and David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king? And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept watch over thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As Jehovah liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept watch over your lord, Jehovah's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his head.—I Sam. 26: 6-16.

This was a great opportunity for David. He might have killed Saul in such a manner that he would never have been discovered. Jonathan's accession to the throne would mean David's return to favor.

What were the motives, primary and secondary, that stayed the sword of David?

Are there experiences in our own lives when we face temptations like this of David's?

Seventh Week, Fifth Day: The Debasement of Saul

Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and encamped in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they encamped in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly. And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at En-dor.

And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, Divine unto me, I pray thee, by the familiar spirit, and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee. And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? And Saul sware to her by Jehovah, saying, As Jehovah liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice; and the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what seest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I see a god coming up out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance.—I Sam. 28: 3-14.

Saul was beaten here at Endor, the tragedy of Gilboa was the logical result. He went into his last fight defeated. The Philistines had broken his nerve at last. He was afraid of them. Faith in Jehovah and faith in his own power were both gone, so he tries to discover the future through the agency of a witch. The rest of the passage (which we have

not quoted) tells what he heard. It does not matter much. When he crawled on his belly before a heathen necromancer, the King of Israel committed suicide.

What is the modern equivalent of Saul's experience?

Seventh Week, Sixth Day: David's Sorrow

And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son (and he bade them teach the children of Judah the song of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jashar):

Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen!
Tell it not in Gath,
Publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
Ye mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you, neither fields of offerings:
For there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away,
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.
From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan turned not back,
And the sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided:
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet delicately,
Who put ornaments of gold upon your apparel.
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan is slain upon thy high places.
I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan:
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me:
Thy love to me was wonderful,
Passing the love of women.
How are the mighty fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!—II Sam. 1: 17-27.

There is no doubt that David owed some part of his popularity to his skill as a poet. The ancient minstrel celebrated great occasions usually with an improvised song. David's relations with Saul and with Jonathan are testimony to the sincerity of his melodious lament.

Seventh Week, Seventh Day: The King

And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of Jehovah, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And Jehovah said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. . . .

Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was thou that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and Jehovah said to thee, Thou shalt be shepherd of my people Israel, and thou shalt be prince over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Jehovah: and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.—II Sam. 2: 1-4; 5: 1-5.

David's vocation is plain. Emphasis has been laid on his personal qualifications by such phrases as "the many-sided David" and "the broadest character in history." His early training was ideal. His testing period tried out his skill as a leader. It also tried his personal integrity; the question was, Is David willing to wait his legitimate opportunity or will he be sure to march over the bodies of his fellowmen? He rang true here as elsewhere.

He became a leader of men not by inheritance or by trickery, but by his own skill and integrity. He achieved his kingdom.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

It has been possible to give only a few brief passages from the record of David's life. The text will be found in a most readable form in Kent's "The Historical Bible." The notes on this period are especially valuable.

CHAPTER VIII

The Liberator

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The motive that led Rameses II to adopt severe measures against the Hebrew tribes, who had lived for four hundred years peacefully tending their flocks under the protection of Egypt, is not difficult to understand. Successful foreign wars conducted by former Pharaohs and especially by his immediate predecessor, Thothmes III, had filled Egypt with groups of aliens drawn from many nations. They formed a serf class that probably far outnumbered the free Egyptians. It is not to be supposed that these aliens would be loyal to the throne of Egypt. The Hebrews came to be regarded as a particular danger, because of their residence in the land of Goshen. They were of the Semitic race and their land lay between Egypt and Palestine. Their racial kinsmen in Palestine, who had been vassals of Egypt, had instituted a series of successful revolts against Rameses II, aided and abetted in all probability by a powerful Hittite kingdom which had grown up in Northern Syria. Rameses had declared war on the Hittites; but the result was a draw, and he was compelled to recognize them. So with the ever-present possibility of an attack from Palestine before his eyes, the growing strength of the Hebrews in Goshen was a matter of deep concern.

Of course, he resorted to the method that is characteristic of those who have fear at their heart—frightfulness. He drafted the able-bodied men into his service as builders and then quietly instructed the midwives to arrange the death of boy babies. The biblical account is very brief and much is left to the imagination. However, it may be safely assumed that the policy was carried out with great care. To avoid disturbance, the men would be drawn away in small groups and everything done to minimize the extent of the plan. The

scheme for destroying the babies is, on the face of it, an underhanded plan. Success on this basis would mean the gradual reduction of the nation to a condition of absolute helplessness with extermination as the end. The situation was desperate.

II

All this was before the eyes of the young Moses as he grew up in the house of the daughter of Pharaoh. Though he was surely trained as an Egyptian and was familiar with the general policy of the government, we know that he remained a Hebrew at heart. If his mother was actually permitted to act as his nurse through the whole period of his youth, we can easily understand the reason for his faithfulness. The bulrushes that grew in the Nile must have been to him a reminder at once of his own narrow escape and of the deadly peril of his people. Able to wander freely over the country, he must have come gradually to comprehend the whole plan of suppression of subject races.

The scanty story seems to indicate that Moses went among the Hebrews frequently. He was able to identify his own kinsmen; and when he attempted to act as peacemaker, the wranglers seemed to know who he was. His first step must have been taken under the influence of sharp excitement. A taskmaster cruelly beat to death one of Moses' own relatives. Moses, after carefully assuring himself that there were no witnesses, performed a summary act of justice by killing the murderer. Knowledge of the exploit leaked out and for Moses safety remained only in flight. Hitherto he had been a favored son of the Egyptians, interested in his Hebrew fellow-tribesmen; the impulsive stroke of his sword not only killed an Egyptian but cut him off once and for all from his Egyptian environment.

In Midian, Moses fortunately allied himself with Jethro, who was a member of the tribe of Kenites. These Kenites were worshipers of Jehovah, akin to the Israelites, then, not only in race but in religion. He married one of Jethro's daughters and settled down to the life of a shepherd.

III

In the wilderness Moses had time to ruminate. The experiences of his own life were probably the starting-point of his

reflections. Behind the brilliant scenes in the court of Pharaoh was the vision of a little basket floating among the bulrushes. Wherever he went, whatever he did, he could never change the fact that he was one saved by providence and the mercy of a princess from among many who were cruelly slain. The circumstances that separated him physically from the Hebrews, by their character only bound him closer to them in spirit. There, more clearly than in Egypt, he could estimate the whole sweep of Pharaoh's plans. Perhaps, too, he realized as never before what it means for shepherds to be suddenly driven to the hard labor of building. His own relation to it all was unmistakable.

In the desert, too, there is an intensifying of man's feeling of dependency. In the cities foresight and energy win the day; in the wilderness, in spite of everything that the wisest and strongest man can do, the elements often conspire against him to bring about his ruin. The immediate debt to nature cannot be overlooked. Possibly Moses' faith had grown dim. No doubt, in an alien household, he had been led into easier ways than those of his race who had grown up within the tribes. In any event, the experience of Midian might be counted upon to intensify his faith and inspire his zeal.

The death of Rameses II seems to have brought matters to the fusion point. For some reason or other, this cleared the way for Moses' safe return to Egypt. So the central question had to be faced.

There is a strange similarity between the situation of Moses and that of Isaiah. Both were being called by the irresistible force of a social situation. Both were men of broad view, destined to careers of constructive statesmanship. The vision in the Temple and the vision of the burning bush are very much alike. Moses, like Isaiah, interpreted his own duty in the light of the needs of his race and, like Isaiah, answered: "Here am I, send me." The experience of Moses indicates that there was in his soul, too, much doubt and hesitation. He finally overcame it all.

IV

Only in the light of his subsequent experiences can we realize fully the problem that Moses pondered upon in the wilderness. He himself, with his intimate knowledge, could have harbored no illusions.

The policy of the Pharaohs was so fierce that there was no way of saving the tribes except by getting them out of Egypt. There is no doubt that they, like other aliens, constituted a real danger. To show weakness in any direction would be to encourage a revolt all along the line. Even if it might be possible to secure mitigation of the harsher regulations, there could be no guarantee for the future. The children of Israel were doomed if they stayed where they were.

There was, first of all, the possibility of securing the release of the tribes all together, on the promise that they would quit the country once and for all. As was discovered later, all Moses' ingenuity failed to secure a reliable promise from the new Pharaoh. Even the plagues and other calamities, which Moses told Pharaoh plainly were the result of his failure to release the Israelites, produced no solid effect till the death of first-born sons frightened the king into a temporizing consent. He repented his leniency immediately and set off in hot pursuit. This struggle with Pharaoh was, without question, fully foreseen by the man who had grown up in the royal family. Moses knew exactly what he had to contend with; and this one difficulty alone might well have given him pause.

The serf class in Egypt, as we have seen, was very large. There is a serf spirit in every serf class. Persecution in bondage produces either violent revolt or a spirit of dull hopeless indifference. When Moses stepped between his two quarreling countrymen, just after he had killed the Egyptian taskmaster, they were obviously afraid to be seen with him. He who was bold enough to kill a taskmaster might get them all into trouble. They did not want him around. The Hebrews were whipped, and well whipped, too. Moses knew them through and through. He knew perfectly well that he would not only have to provide a way of escape but would have to put into the people the courage and will to escape. Not once but many times they actually reproached him with having taken them away from Egypt. Nothing could show more clearly the depths to which they had sunk. They feared the unknown more than the severities they were suffering. Even when he had brought the whole nation to the borders of Palestine, they lost their nerve completely; and until those Israelites who had left Egypt had passed away and a new and sturdier, desert-bred generation had taken their place, no ad-

...ance could be made into the Promised Land. Only by super-human effort was Moses able to stiffen their morale so that they might have the courage to run away.

V

But Moses was the man for the undertaking. Of course, he had the primary requisites of personality and of knowledge of the situation. His exceptional training stood him in good stead. Yet only courage born of faith in Jehovah could have driven him to the task of forcing a race of reluctant slaves out into a life of liberty. What a difference if he had been leading those resolute warriors of the later generation, who crossed the Jordan with a firm step, scattering the Canaanites before them! But he was equal to the task set for him.

His experience has been shared in by more than one leader since his day. Liberty must be bought with a price and men habitually prefer not to be disturbed too much, as long as they can live along some way or other. George Washington had no easy time keeping men alive to the necessity of "carrying on" to the end. Italian independence was achieved only after great leaders fairly dragged the people to the fountain of liberty. There are still those who counsel acquiescence to the base demands of Germany's rulers, not on the basis of principle, but simply because it is easier to give up and let things slide. All of us may take courage from Moses. He foresaw all the dangers and all the difficulties, yet he took his chosen line. And not only did he keep his own courage; by indomitable resolution, he literally held the flabby nation on its feet, and carried them forward till from the heights of Moab they could see the prize. All they needed to do then was to step forward and seize it.

DAILY READINGS

Eighth Week, First Day: The Persecution

Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight

against us, and get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor. . . .

And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of the one was Shiphrah, and the name of the other Puah: and he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the birth-stool; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. And the king of Egypt called for the midwives, and said unto them, Why have ye done this thing, and have saved the men-children alive? And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are lively, and are delivered ere the midwife come unto them. And God dealt well with the midwives: and the people multiplied, and waxed very mighty. And it came to pass, because the midwives feared God, that he made them households. And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.—Exodus 1: 8-22.

Some of the great works built by the slaves in Egypt are standing today. They are the living witnesses alike of the energy and ambition of the Pharaohs and of the desperate cruelty of the system by which they achieved their results.

Has the practice here depicted yet died out of the world?

Eighth Week, Second Day: One Man-Child Saved

And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch; and she put the child therein, and laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to know what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh

came down to bathe at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river-side; and she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her handmaid to fetch it. And she opened it, and saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maiden went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses, and said, Because I drew him out of the water.—Exodus 2: 1-10.

No doubt, the Hebrew mothers resorted to a hundred different means for saving their new-born babes. The narrative is vivid and convincing.

Try to reconstruct the life of a Hebrew family under the oppression. Perhaps the Armenians today will furnish a clue.

Eighth Week, Third Day: A Blow for Liberty

And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And he went out the second day, and, behold, two men of the Hebrews were striving together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? thinkest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely the thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.—Exodus 2: 11-15.

This was the turning-point of Moses' life. These concrete experiences often drive men by impulse into acts that commit them irrevocably to the cause where their hearts are.

Eighth Week, Fourth Day: Moses' Call

And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. . . . Now Moses was keeping the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back of the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God, unto Horeb. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will turn aside now, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when Jehovah saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. . . . And Jehovah said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite. . . . Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, hath appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt: and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Amorite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. And they shall hearketh to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, Jehovah, the God of the Hebrews, hath met with us: and now let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to Jehovah our God.—Exodus 2: 23; 3: 1-5; 7, 8; 16-18.

Taking these suggestive verses as our starting-point, we should each endeavor to reconstruct Moses' whole experience with Jehovah in the wilderness.

Do any of our experiences parallel this striking experience of Moses?

Eighth Week, Fifth Day: The Price of Liberty

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people were fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was changed towards the people, and they said, What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: and he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over all of them. And Jehovah hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: for the children of Israel went out with a high hand. And the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians were marching after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto Jehovah. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to bring us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we spake unto thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it were better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will work for you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. Jehovah will fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.—Exodus 14: 5-14.

Eighth Week, Sixth Day: Faint Hearts

And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a prince among them. And Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran according to the commandment of Jehovah: all of them men who were heads of the children of Israel. . . . And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto

them, Get you up this way by the South, and go up into the hill-country: and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwell therein, whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it is good or bad; and what cities they are that they dwell in, whether in camps, or in strongholds; and what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there is wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first-ripe grapes. . . .

And they returned from spying out the land at the end of forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us; and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Howbeit the people that dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. Amalek dwelleth in the land of the South: and the Hittite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, dwell in the hill-country; and the Canaanite dwelleth by the sea, and along by the side of the Jordan.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.—Num. 13: 1-3; 17-20; 25-31.

How keen must have been Moses' disappointment at a time like this, we can hardly imagine. But they could not be driven to their task. They preferred Egypt to freedom in the wilderness, now they prefer the wilderness to the dangers of conquest.

What is the national lesson in all of this?

Eighth Week, Seventh Day: The Journey's End

And Jehovah said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tent of meeting. And Jehovah appeared in the Tent in a pillar of cloud: and the pillar of

cloud stood over the door of the Tent. . . . And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee. . . . And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And Jehovah showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the hinder sea, and the South, and the Plain of the valley of Jericho the city of palm-trees, unto Zoar. And Jehovah said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah. And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.—Deut. 31: 14, 15, 23; 34: 1-6.

With the Promised Land in sight, Moses passes the leadership on to Joshua.

What are the striking lessons to be learned from Moses' achievements as a leader of men?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

There are three lines of study which may be pursued, using the text of the Bible as the basis:

1. The character of Moses.
2. The qualifications for national leadership as exhibited in Moses' career.
3. The development of the children of Israel between Goshen and Jericho.

CHAPTER IX

The Wall Builder

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The call of duty finds men in various circumstances. Some, like Isaiah in Jerusalem or Jacob Riis in New York, or Arnold Toynbee in London, find their work just where they are. But with others it is different. The capital of Israel called Amos from his lonely desert, India summoned William Carey from a shoemaker's bench, Manchuria beckoned to Arthur Jackson in Cambridge University. There is no rule about all this. The far call sometimes sounds louder and clearer than the voice that speaks from the next street, but frequently the case is just reversed. But we are all willing to reverence that man or woman who, living in comfortable circumstances and provided with useful work, is yet keen enough to appreciate and courageous enough to embrace a larger service that means the giving up of the assured and familiar things of life. We have seen much of this since July, 1914, though the lesson fades all too soon.

The deputation of Jews that waited on Nehemiah in the Persian palace at Susa, had traveled fifteen hundred miles over mountains and barren deserts to see him. It was in the year 446 B. C. More than a century before, the last vestige of the great kingdom of David had been wiped out by Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem. This finally destroyed the southern kingdom of Judah. The northern had gone long before. Only once again in history, and that for a very brief period, did the Jewish nation enjoy anything resembling political independence. Nebuchadnezzar had carried the better part of the nation captive to Babylon. But Babylon's turn came, too, and the Persian wave, rolling up from the southeast, overwhelmed the proud empire. Some Jews had been permitted to return and an attempt had been made to rebuild the temple and establish the Jewish community once more.

Nehemiah was anxious to hear how things were going in Jerusalem.

The report was discouraging. The people were scattered and disheartened, the walls of the city were all down. Much more must have been said of which we have no record. Nehemiah's help was urgently needed; and there might have been in the minds of the emissaries the fear that if they painted too hopeless a picture he would not take the trouble to make the long journey. But still they must have pressed upon him the desperate need of his compatriots.

The struggling community at Jerusalem was surrounded by enemies. The Ammonites were very powerful in the east. Arabian tribes came up on their raids from the south and southeast. On the west there was a race descended from the Hebrews' most ancient foes, the Philistines, with headquarters at Ashdod. On the north there had appeared the Samaritans, a mixed people who drew part of their blood from the inhabitants of the old northern kingdom of Israel. These actually worshiped in Jerusalem and were particularly scornful of the Jews.

Within, the Jewish community itself was not of one mind. The priestly rulers who had come into power at the restoration were preying on the people, and were naturally hostile to anyone who proposed to disturb their profitable trade. There was also a section that was perfectly satisfied with conditions as they stood and encouraged free intermarrying with the tribes in the neighborhood.

Nehemiah held a favored position in the palace of the Persian king, Artaxerxes; presumably he was surrounded with every comfort. It meant a long hard journey of at least ten weeks to get to Jerusalem; and the question was, What would he find when he got there? Was the game really worth the candle?

II

The appeal looks pretty feeble as thus stated. No doubt hard tasks have a special fascination for strong men; but as a rule strong men, if they are wise men too, do not like to give their energies to mean and futile undertakings. Exhorting a poor-spirited community to get together under the scornful eyes of the Samaritans, behind whom lurked real enemies with sword in hand—this was not a very inviting challenge.

But there was a great deal behind. We have frequently referred to the sense of mission inherent in the Hebrew race. How deeply rooted it was we may judge from the fact that the captivity in Babylon failed to obliterate it. In exile, the children of Israel clung to their own faith; and, no longer distracted by war and politics, the leader chose this time for collecting and studying their sacred writings and for preaching to the exiles the firm doctrine that Jehovah was still their God and they were still Jehovah's people. Nor were they left without guides. Ezekiel, the prophet-priest of the exile, spoke words of hope. It is now generally believed that the burning words contained in the latter part of the book of Isaiah were spoken by another prophet, possibly of the same name, who lived and worked in Judea just before Nehemiah's time. In any event the message of that book was a living reality to the men of that day; for we find Nehemiah using the phrase "servant of Jehovah" a number of times in the first prayer recorded in his writings. Through all that long period of discouragement from the surrender of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar to the days when the Jews who had returned to Judea were making such a deplorable showing, there was still a group of faithful followers of God trying earnestly to hold Israel up to her high calling.

There appeared before Nehemiah then not only the holy city as it was, torn by dissension and unwalled to the foe, but an ideal city, a new Jerusalem, fit abode for Jehovah. These later seers were not concerned for a return of material sovereignty, they saw Israel's mission in another light. And Nehemiah, too, must have understood—was he not a servant of a Persian king?—that the divine calling was not dependent upon national power but upon righteousness. All this is the realization of a great truth that is applicable alike to nations and to individuals—the only thing in the world that has power to beat a man is himself. There is that central citadel that nobody can take: many men surrender it, but it can be defended against all comers. So it was with Israel. Let the nation but keep its faith and it must rise victorious after every fall.

III

So Nehemiah, the cup-bearer of Artaxerxes, faced the issue in the Persion palace at Susa. God's call was coming to him,

rst of all through the plain human need of his brothers. hen the divine voice spoke clear through the great ideals of is race and stirring messages of its prophets. The depth of he appeal we can judge from the prayer that burst from his ips in the days of mourning and fasting when he turned the ituation over in his mind: "Let thine ears now be attentive nd thine eyes open, to hear the supplication of thy servant, which I am now making before thee, day and night, for the sraelites thy servants, while I confess the sins of the Israelites, which we have sinned against thee, as I also and my father's house have sinned." The prayer is that of a man whose decision is taken. He only waits for the assurance of God's help before he undertakes his difficult task.

There was much to be done. The cupbearer of the Persian king was not free to go and come as he chose. Besides, he needed the full cooperation of his sovereign. Nehemiah was no tyro in statesmanship; he lived among great nations at the very center of power. The large plans he made would require large powers for their fulfilment. These he was determined to have. So he presented his request in full. Artaxerxes evidently valued his servant, for he was unwilling to grant anything but a special leave. But Nehemiah obtained all that he desired and fixed the period of his return. An escort of Persian horsemen was provided and official letters to all the governors of the vast Persian dominions that stretched from the far east all the way to Egypt were put in his hands.

And Nehemiah set out for Jerusalem.

DAILY READINGS

With the background suggested above, special comment on the scripture passages selected would be superfluous. The vivid narrative brings out with great effect the sterling character of the man who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.

Ninth Week, First Day: A Deputation from Jerusalem

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah.
Now it came to pass in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani,

one of my brethren, came, he and certain men out of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, that were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days; and I fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O Jehovah, the God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee at this time, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, while I confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee. Yea, I and my father's house have sinned: we have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the ordinances, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye trespass, I will scatter you abroad among the peoples: but if ye return unto me, and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heavens, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen, to cause my name to dwell there. Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who delight to fear thy name; and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.—Neh. 1: 1-11.

Ninth Week, Second Day: The King's Cupbearer

Now I was cupbearer to the king. And it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, when wine was before him, that I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been beforetime sad in his presence. And the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid. And I said unto the king, Let the king live

or ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when ne city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, nd the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then the ing said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the king, f it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor n thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto he city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said unto me (the queen also sitting by im), For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt hou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the River, that they may let me pass through till I come unto Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the castle which appertaineth to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.—Neh. 2: 1-8.

Ninth Week, Third Day: Personal Investigation

Then I came to the governors beyond the River, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me captains of the army and horsemen. And when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, for that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem; neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the jackal's well, and to the dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall; and I turned back, and entered by the valley gate, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

Then said I unto them, Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work.—Neh. 2: 9-18.

Ninth Week, Fourth Day: Prayer and a Sentry

So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto half the height thereof: for the people had a mind to work. But it came to pass that, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth; and they conspired all of them together to come and fight against Jerusalem, and to cause confusion therein. But we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall. And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come into the midst of them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease. And it came to pass that, when the Jews that dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times from all places, Ye must return unto us. Therefore set I in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places, I set there the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, who is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.—Neh. 4: 6-14.

Ninth Week, Fifth Day: Sword and Trowel

And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that half of my servants wrought in the work, and half of them held the spears, the shields, and the bows,

and the coats of mail; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They that builded the wall and they that bare burdens laded themselves; every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held his weapon; and the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another: in what place soever ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us; our God will fight for us.

So we wrought in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and may labor in the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard that followed me, none of us put off our clothes, every one went with his weapon to the water.—Neh. 4: 15-23.

Ninth Week, Sixth Day: Treachery

Now it came to pass, when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah, and to Geshem the Arabian, and unto the rest of our enemies, that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein (though even unto that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me saying, Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief. And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? And they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand, wherein was written, It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou art building the wall: and thou wouldest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things

done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. But now, O God, strengthen thou my hands.—Neh. 6: 1-9.

Ninth Week, Seventh Day: The Work Finished

And I went unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being such as I would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And I discerned, and, lo, God had not sent him; but he pronounced this prophecy against me: and Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. For this cause was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. Remember, O my God, Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and also the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, when all our enemies heard thereof, that all the nations that were about us feared, and were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.—Neh. 6: 10-16.

Nothing could be more plain and direct than this fast-moving story. After reading it, we know the kind of a man to whom the call came in the Persian palace. Firmness and sensitiveness are combined in just the right proportion. Nehemiah was a true statesman. He was infinitely flexible in the smaller things—how else could he have united the elements in Jerusalem?—but beneath he was dominated by a purpose as fixed as the stars.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Compare some of the great statesmen of the Old Testament: Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Nehemiah, Josiah.

tudy them as to their aims, their qualifications, and their ethods. Such a study may probably be best introduced by eading rapidly through the sketches on each man in some tandard Bible dictionary. Avoid elaborate commentaries in omparisons of this kind; form your own conceptions.

CHAPTER X

The Man Who Failed

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The career of Simon Peter above all others brings inspiration and comfort to us average fellows who just barely manage to get along. The number of those confident men who feel in themselves the ability to grasp their destinies and shape them to their will is comparatively small. Most of us move ahead with a great deal of uncertainty and hope it will all come out right, somehow or other. We fail very often and things look very dark for a time. Let us then remember the fisherman of Galilee, impulsive and blundering, who followed the light as he saw it, and came finally through the worst kind of failure with a character so toughened by experience that he was fit to become a leader of the most influential movement the world has ever seen.

II

Peter was first challenged as a grown man, plying his peaceful trade as a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee in the northern part of Palestine. It was a wandering teacher, about whom he had probably heard very little, who stopped on the shore one day and urged Peter and his brother to forsake their chosen trade and to fish for men instead. It is not likely that fishing in the Sea of Galilee was a profession that brought him much return, but it represented to Peter the assured things of life; and even in Palestine the following of a wandering teacher demanded a decision of some seriousness.

We cannot imagine that Peter at that time had any conception of the kind of leader to whom he was attaching himself. The personal attractiveness and incisive words of the teacher probably struck a responsive chord in his heart and he was

willing to proceed. Ardent and impulsive, he answered as he felt; without knowing where it would lead him, he responded to something that appealed deeply to him. Yet, however casual was this response, however unthinking may have been the first impulsive move, it was the first step and upon it depended all the rest.

That over-caution or lack of courage that causes us to hold back at the first moment under strong conviction has closed the door of destiny in the face of many a man.

III

References to the disciples are very meager in the four gospels, but Peter appears frequently; and the circumstances seem to indicate that he was a leader among them, one who enjoyed the special confidence of Jesus. Jesus went into his house to heal his mother-in-law. Peter and James and John were their Master's only companions alike in the mount of Transfiguration and in the dark hours in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was perhaps an eager learner, since he is reported as asking the meaning of parables and as seeking information regarding the number of times one must forgive. Jesus also puts questions to him, evidently with the intention of drawing him out. The Fourth Gospel records his objection to Jesus' performing the menial task of foot-washing. At one point of extreme danger for Peter, Jesus assures him of prayer in his behalf.

Peter's character seems reasonably clear even in these brief notices. He surely won the affection and trust of his Master and was one of those who were always with Jesus. He gradually came to understand the character of his Leader and at Cæsarea Philippi makes the great confession: "Thou art the Christ." This placed Jesus in the highest category known to a pious Jew. It was characteristic of Peter that a moment later he should blurt out what all the rest were probably thinking and thus earn for himself a stern rebuke.

As the last grim hour approached, it was Peter who protested that his loyalty would carry him with his Master even to death. To the very best of his ability he was responding to the appeal of Jesus, trying to live up to his highest light. He valiantly drew his sword and struck when they laid hands on his Lord. And when Jesus was led up to the judgment-

hall we must not let the shadow of Peter's colossal failure blind us to the fact that at least he did follow, with some idea of being of help in the supreme crisis.

Then came the fall. In the dreary hours of early morning, the shivering disciple, surrounded by enemies, tries to warm himself at a fire in the courtyard. With no help in sight, he saves his own skin by a disloyal betrayal. This is the pitiful collapse of a man who was doing his best.

It appeared that everything was at an end, not only for Jesus but for Peter.

IV

Here then is the encouragement for us, one and all. This was not the end but the beginning of Peter's career. Once convinced that his Master is alive, his courage rises and he tries again. With strong determination he puts this terrible failure behind him and once more responds to the appeal. He sees before him the plain duty of taking up the work where Jesus left it. The great responsibility calls out all the man there is in him. Boldly he begins to preach the new doctrine; and when he is summoned before the Council, this same Peter, who lied to a girl outside the court of justice, announces calmly that he will obey God and continue preaching when and where he chooses. He is recognized as the leader of the new community.

Not only does he advance in courage and energy, but he progresses in breadth of mind far beyond the Jews of his day and even beyond his fellow-Christians at Jerusalem. We are inclined to blame Peter for his hesitation in taking the Gentile Christians to his heart. What we should remember is that this untrained man, who was a product of an environment entirely different from that which gave Paul his breadth of experience, actually laid aside the prejudices of his ancestors and joined in the larger plans of the great missionary apostle.

Somehow or other, for our own soul's good, we must learn to appreciate the gap that yawns between the fisherman on the Sea of Galilee and the leader of the Church at Jerusalem, who gave his benediction to Paul's mission to the Gentiles. We shall then perhaps be able to understand the unfolding of the life-work of Simon Peter. He is pictured to us by our artists as a rough man, almost uncouth. But whatever his outward

ppearance, he was a man highly sensitive to impressions of ll kinds. He was up one moment and down the next. Popularly we have usually thought of John as a mystic, possessed of a character embodying some of the qualities of women, een sensibility combined with an inconceivable power of resistance at critical times. Peter was quite different, but his quick response to the promptings of his heart indicates his deep sincerity and the transparent motive of his life. His bent was toward truth and righteousness.

Such a man was, of course, peculiarly liable to make mistakes. Caution protects us from blunders that usually appear ridiculous and often bring us into serious danger. At the same time, however, caution may keep us from the impulsive kindness that means so much in life. Spontaneous heroism is the achievement of the unstudied, daring man. Peter, like the rest of his kind, probably kept his friends on pins and needles; they would hardly be done blushing for one of his foolish blunders before they would be held speechless before an exhibition of transcendent insight or daring courage. But ever he was headed in the right direction—mounting up, up, up.

Just because of his sensitiveness Jesus made such a profound impression on him. The very life power of the Master kept sinking into Peter day by day. He seems to have seen further than the rest. And we cannot forget that after he had betrayed his Lord he did not try to carry it off with a swagger; he went out and wept bitterly. Thus his character gained what it lacked most—strength and constancy. This resulted in his gaining a recognized leadership among his fellows. He was a "rolling stone"; he indeed became a "rock." And as time went on he was also given the great gift of a new sympathy and a new breadth of vision that remain nearly incomprehensible.

His early condition was the condition of millions of us. Are we willing to follow, in spite of ridicule and failure, the simple plan of allowing our best impulses to respond instantly to the stimulus of great ideas and good men?

DAILY READINGS

Tenth Week, First Day: The First Response

Now after John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time

is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel.

And passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they left the nets, and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending the nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after him. . . . And in the morning, a great while before day, he rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. And Simon and they that were with him followed after him; and they found him, and say unto him, All are seeking thee. And he saith unto them, Let us go elsewhere into the next towns, that I may preach there also; for to this end came I forth. And he went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out demons.—Mark 1: 14-20; 35-39.

Peter, called from his nets, becomes at once an eager follower of Jesus.

Are we responding as Peter did to the best impressions that reach us?

Tenth Week, Second Day: The Master's Friends

While he yet spake, they come from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Teacher any further? But Jesus, not heeding the word spoken, saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow with him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.—Mark 5: 35-37.

And it came to pass about eight days after these sayings, that he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and

the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah: not knowing what he said.—Luke 9: 28-33.

And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled. —Mark 14: 32, 33.

Of the twelve who were disciples these three, Peter, James, and John, are the only ones Jesus permitted to accompany him at critical times. Remember, too, that he knew Peter's unstable character and had foretold the betrayal.

Tenth Week, Third Day: A Great Trust

And the day of unleavened bread came, on which the passover must be sacrificed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and make ready for us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we make ready? And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house whereinto he goeth. And ye shall say unto the master of the house, The Teacher saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.—Luke 22: 7-13.

It is evident that Jesus wished to make sure of a quiet hour with his disciples before he was taken by the authorities. This shows no hesitation in trusting Peter with the secret—though he knows his weakness.

Did Jesus fear that Peter would betray his Master?

Tenth Week, Fourth Day: An Impulse

And Jesus went forth, and his disciples, into the villages of Cæsarea Philippi: and on the way he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Who do men say that I am? And they told him, saying, John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. And he asked

them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answered and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ. And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.—Mark 8: 27-33.

Here is Peter just as he is. He sums up the hope of the disciples in his recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, then he sums up their fears in the unfortunate remark that calls down on his head such a sharp rebuke in the light of all Jesus' dealings with Peter.

Does not this whole experience show Peter's value in the group?

Tenth Week, Fifth Day: The Denial

And as Peter was beneath in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest; and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus. But he denied, saying, I neither know, nor understand what thou sayest: and he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And the maid saw him, and began again to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. But he again denied it. And after a little while again they that stood by said to Peter, Of a truth thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilæan. But he began to curse, and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And straightway the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word, how that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept.—Mark 14: 66-72.

What was the difference between Peter and Judas?

Tenth Week, Sixth Day: A New Commission

So when they had broken their fast, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest

that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Tend my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.—John 21: 15-17.

Even great causes do not go of their own momentum. It is true that Christianity was and is something more than the sum total of Christians, but leadership is essential to the maintenance of unity and energy in any group. Jesus himself spoke of the people as scattered because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Peter became preeminently the shepherd of the little flock in Jerusalem. He not only led them into the proper pastures, but he stood between them and the thief and the robber. The work to which he was finally called was a very great work.

What lesson should Peter's achievement teach us as we try to develop the capabilities of other men?

Tenth Week, Seventh Day: A New Man

Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and charged them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard. And they, when they had further threatened them, let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people; for

all men glorified God for that which was done.—Acts 4: 13-21.

If time permits, read the passage immediately preceding this. There is shown here not merely defiant courage but a new mental grasp and energy, a strange and wonderful confidence. As Professor Burkitt says, "However we may look at it, the rise of Christianity is a wonderful, a most wonderful tale. It must always remain a portent to be marvelled at, a thing that cannot wholly be explained." The sudden energy and vigor of these early Christians is, indeed, something to be marvelled at. And Peter stands among them, a dismal failure made over into a supreme success.

Have you any idea as to the key of the puzzle of such success?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Gather up all the New Testament references to Peter. Are the suggestions in the foregoing study justified?

CHAPTER XI

Jesus: the Call of Life

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

Social Reform—this has been a magic word in the twentieth century. It covers a movement of thought that is ill-defined and uncertain, but there is a meaning in it all just the same. Social service appears as an appeal to the enlightened and fortunate youth of America. Social reconstruction is ever on the lips of radical thinkers. Social revolution is a threat. The leaders of the Christian Church are talking of Social Christianity. Socialism is a hope, a program, or a philosophy according to its setting. To one and all the word carries the sense of a new order of life where things are more as we would wish them to be.

Certain of the outward manifestations of this social spirit have, of course, melted away in the Great War; but the stupendous struggle has released new social forces everywhere. For all its excesses, the Russian madness is a dream; and there are thousands of dreamers among the Allies who are fighting to the end in the firm faith that we are going to be able to get the ground cleared for something new.

"The Kingdom of God" was likewise a magic word to the Jews in the days of Jesus. We cannot be exactly sure what it meant, because each one described it in its own way. At one extreme were those who considered it something coming from God which man must wait for in patience: others saw it as an earthly domination to be realized by the swords of determined warriors. Between the extremes were men and women of every shade of thought. Common to all was the conviction that it would be a kingdom of Jews; and in every mind there had grown up a picture of the Messiah, the King who was to inaugurate this reign of God. However refined and fantastic the dream of the Pharisees and their kind, the mass of the

people expected a real king—one who would deliver them from the thralldom of Rome and restore the glorious days of David. To them the advent of the true Messiah would be a call to arms.

A recent writer has given us a picture in the words of Terah, ruler of the synagogue in the village of Gath Hepher in Galilee:

"My heart is sick, and my eyes must soon close without seeing the glory of the last days. But perhaps it is better with those who have gone to Sheol than with us who see our land consumed by our enemies. They sleep in peace, but they shall awake and come forth from the dust when King Messiah destroys our foes on every side, and when He makes Zion higher than all the mountains of the earth. Then shall our land be clean again, and the light of Israel be greater than the glory of David and Solomon. All nations shall gather themselves under the banner of our King, and He shall rule in the might of God over a Kingdom that shall never be destroyed. Then shall we go up to the feast year by year, singing as we go, and none shall ever make us afraid. We shall plow these fields again with joy, and gather our harvests in peace. We shall sit under our vines and fig-trees, and shall meditate on the law of the Lord, and all Israel shall keep the law with perfect hearts in the days of Messiah. Would God that those days might come speedily." (Gilbert: "Jesus: for the Men of Today.")

II

However we may interpret the circumstances, the New Testament writers are sure that Jesus faced the real temptations of men in the same way that we must face them. He *won* his sinlessness. The gospels present in detail only the temptations incident to the choice of his vocation. Such temptations are critical in the life of every man to whom any real choice is open; they were critical for Jesus, too.

As we know well, the first call came from John the Baptist. Jesus had been living his quiet life in Galilee, preparing himself for his mission. He grew up in the center of revolution. The Hebrews were suddenly stirred by the burning words of a preacher from the wilderness, who chose the valley of the Jordan near Jericho as his auditorium. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," he cried. The stirring words had been

pronounced and they spread like fire among the people. Some must have been very much disappointed that his message was primarily a call to repent. Like Amos, who lived in the same desert, John's mission was to criticize, to condemn. His baptism was symbol of repentance for sin. The Kingdom and the Messiah were both near at hand: "make the way ready for the Lord, level his paths for him."

And Jesus came to John in the wilderness. The magic word had been spoken and the crowds were there. Though John's preaching was hardly in line with the ordinary hopes of the people, the promise in the terms he used was strong enough to draw them there. And we know from experience in revivals in our day that the message of repentance always appeals to the people at large because man's consciousness of wrongdoing is almost universal. The whole movement satisfied Jesus; he accepted John's baptism not as a sign of repentance, but as a sign that he, Jesus of Nazareth, was conscious of his mission and thereby committed himself to the cause. This was the first decision, but the choice of ways now presented itself.

The crisis of his fate he would face alone. So he goes into the very wilderness whence came the preacher and closes in a death grapple with the insidious power of evil.

He had assumed the position of leader of the new order, he was to live as the Messiah inaugurating the Kingdom of God. The question was, what kind of a kingdom and what kind of Messiah? There was the popular conception of a revolutionary kingdom led by a military revolutionist. The destruction of the Gentile nations and the enthronement of Israel was its aim. There were other elements in the teaching of the past, too. Isaiah had told of a suffering servant of Jehovah, and John himself had very distinctly told his audiences that Jewish birth did not count. But the people nevertheless expected the popular, material kingdom. They were ready for the rallying cry; they would spring to arms at the first shout.

Could not the two ideals be harmonized? Could not the Kingdom be established as the people wished it to be established and then remolded into something purer and finer? Was there not a way through the evil to the ultimate good? To many it might seem so. If this could not be, then how could the people be roused? How would they recognize the Kingdom set up any other way?

He put this all aside. He put aside, too, the possibility of dazzling the Jews by the marvelous powers of his own personality. Steadily the field narrowed. One by one he rejected all the external means. He saw clearly the kind of kingdom it ought to be, he saw clearly the kind of citizens that ought to make up that kingdom, he saw clearly the kind of a leader who could bring it about. There was only one way out—to stand against the whole popular idea from the very start and to appeal directly to men in the interests of truth and justice and love and righteousness. The forty days in the wilderness ended. He came back to his own people. In the synagogue in his own "home town," he read them a passage from the Sacred Book, a passage that dealt not with thrones and kings and conquerors, but with justice and kindness and healing—adding quietly, "This is my message and my way."

III

Such a lesson ought to require no comment. Its central significance is plain enough. Yet still we have young men and women by the thousands, endowed with extraordinary personal powers and blessed with exceptional opportunities, who, though they are mastered by a noble impulse of service, still think that they may realize their dream by a roundabout path. "Let me first have power, then I will use it to do good." "For the first few years I will make money, then I can spend that money to help the needs of humanity." "Above all I must cultivate myself carefully, so that later on I shall be fit to help my fellow-men." The power comes and impulse dies. The money comes, but it claims the soul for itself. The culture comes, but it separates the man from his fellows. He who faced all these issues still says to us: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God!"

DAILY READINGS

Eleventh Week, First Day: Preparedness

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judæa, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituræa and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, in the highpriesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came unto John

the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Make ye ready the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled,
And every mountain and hill shall be brought low;
And the crooked shall become straight,
And the rough ways smooth;
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

He said therefore to the multitudes that went out to be baptized of him, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And even now the axe also lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then must we do? And he answered and said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise. And there came also publicans to be baptized, and they said unto him, Teacher, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort no more than that which is appointed you. And soldiers also asked him, saying, And we, what must we do? And he said unto them, Extort from no man by violence, neither accuse any one wrongfully; and be content with your wages.—Luke 3: 1-14.

We always think of John as the *Forerunner* of Jesus. Those who heard John as yet knew nothing about Jesus. Can we place ourselves in their position and try to appreciate the significance of his words for them? Have they any particular significance for us?

Eleventh Week, Second Day: Commissioned

And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not

worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

With many other exhortations therefore preached he good tidings unto the people; but Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother's wife, and for all the evil things which Herod had done, added this also to them all, that he shut up John in prison.

Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.—Luke 3: 15-22.

Why did Jesus thus ally himself with the movement of John?

Making full allowance for the difference between Jesus and ourselves, do we ever face the same kind of a situation?

How much of Jesus' life-work decision was taken at the Jordan?

Eleventh Week, Third Day: Tempted in All Points

And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil. And he did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, he hungered. And the devil said unto him, if thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it become bread. And Jesus answered unto him, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone. And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall all be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And he led him to Jerusalem, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written,

He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to guard thee:
and
On their hands they shall bear thee up,
Lest haply thou dash thy foot against a stone.
And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God.
And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from him for a season.—Luke 4: 1-13.

This passage is all too familiar to most of us. As far as possible, change it into a modern setting.

Has any experience of this particular kind come to us?

To what extent does a similar temptation face younger men and women today?

What do we learn from the experience that might help us to be of service to others in the critical decisions of life?

Eleventh Week, Fourth Day: The New and the Old

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book, and found the place where it was written,
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised,
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth: and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?—Luke 4: 16-22.

The words that Jesus chose to express his mission were familiar to his hearers. By using them, he indicated that his own message was not entirely new. It was akin to the best teachings of the prophets of Israel.

It has often been asked why he used the term Kingdom of God when he meant to convey something new and striking. Sufficient justification can be found in his desire to make use of the very best of the old era and in his recognition of the real value that there was in the kingdom hope. Israel's aspirations had a high motive at their heart. Wisely he sought to develop the truth as he found it. Also, there was great practical value in preventing the bald statement that he was against the Kingdom. People might disagree with his idea of the Kingdom, but he made the Kingdom the heart of his message just the same.

Picture the synagogue in Nazareth. Just what did the people imagine when he made his startling announcement?

Eleventh Week, Fifth Day: An Appeal to Israel's Sense of Duty

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. 5: 13-20.

Jesus was addressing members of the race that considered itself specially intrusted with a divine mission. "Ye are the salt of the earth." This is a direct challenge. He seems to be saying: "You call yourselves the chosen of God, but you are doing nothing to back up God's choice. You say you have

been intrusted with a special message, why don't you preach the message?" Moffatt translates the sentence: "But if salt becomes insipid, what can make it salt again?" Further, Jesus recognized the value of the law. They cannot complain that he is conducting a campaign against their national religion. He urges them to live up to their fullest opportunity.

What light does all this throw on his own idea of his calling?

Eleventh Week, Sixth Day: The Answer to the Temptations

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.—Matt. 6: 24-33.

Compare this passage with the reading for the Third Day in this study.

How do both bear upon the problems of life work, which we must face ourselves or help others to face?

Eleventh Week, Seventh Day: An Interpretation

These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to

heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee: even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that to all whom thou hast given him, he should give eternal life. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.—John 17: 1-3.

The Gospel of John was probably written long after the others and addressed primarily to those who had not the Jewish background. To such readers the term, "Kingdom of God," would have meant very little. They were not part and parcel of the history that included Moses and David and Isaiah and Judas Maccabæus. Throughout this gospel, then, "eternal life" seems to take the place of "Kingdom of God." Thus, the truth proclaimed among the Hebrews is universalized in a beautiful and striking manner.

The complete mission of Jesus is put into these simple, universal words.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Special books of study are not particularly useful here. An endeavor should be made to see the gospel story in a new light. To this end it is suggested that the life of Jesus be read in Kent's "Shorter Bible," the New Testament section of which is ready for the press as these words are written.

CHAPTER XII

Jesus: the Call of Death

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

I

The mere mention of the death of Jesus calls up before our minds the tragic yet victorious symbol of the Cross, crowning not only our churches but the whole two thousand years of Christian history. From the first days the devotion of His followers has gathered around the great act of sacrifice. Though it has proved a stumbling-block to the Jews and been regarded as foolishness by the Greeks down through all ages, nevertheless to us it has been the power of salvation. And even unbelievers, when they try worthily to describe some act of devotion to the death, are driven back to one single word—Calvary.

It may seem that one has no right to touch upon the death of Our Lord without taking cognizance of all this. To present incomplete ideas may seem a belittling of its importance. Yet we do ask the privilege of treating in a simple way in this study some aspects not often considered, without touching upon the deeper significance that is the heart of Christian belief. The main theme of these meditations is life work. Therefore, we propose briefly to emphasize the death of Jesus as it appears in relation to his vocation, leaving the larger interpretation to others.

II

It has been noted that Jesus rejected the current Jewish ideal of the Kingdom of God and of the mission of the Messiah, yet he retained the idea and preached the Kingdom. It was a new kind of Kingdom.

He had to explain himself: he became a teacher. The true Kingdom, he told the crowds who followed him, was peopled by the poor in spirit, the meek, the peacemakers, the merciful, the pure in heart. He specially blessed those "that hunger and thirst after righteousness." In the face of the Pharisees, he warned men that strict observances of form would get them nothing, but that evil thoughts would ruin them. He urged them to forget resentment and learn to forgive seventy times seven. He enforced and completed all his ethics by his teaching about the character and purposes of God. He told men of a Father in heaven, just and merciful, to whose courts the humblest was a thousand times welcome.

"From the beginning of his preaching in Galilee, Jesus was a popular hero. His sweetness of temper, the authority and attractiveness of his teaching, his undisguised sympathy with the despised masses, his superiority to his religious superiors, his philanthropy, the very mystery in his Messianic character—all brought thousands to him" (Shailer Mathews: "New Testament Times in Palestine").

These qualities in Jesus have not been dimmed by time. There are still thousands who sit at his feet in the same way: even though we find it about as hard to follow his way of life now as they did then, we recognize the truth of all that he said and all men in their better moments do desire to be like him. A great variety of sects, inside the Church and out of it, claim him as their own. There are, of course, a few who, on the basis of these teachings, have referred sarcastically to him as the "pale Galilæan;" but a large proportion of the robust minds of every century join in extolling "the sane and well-poised mind of the plain mechanic of Nazareth."

III

It has seemed to many that this was a proper and complete working out of the vocation of Jesus. To explain the new way of life and to offer a perfect model of that life, was the supreme need of the hour and indeed anticipated the need of mankind for ages to come. Some have even felt that as he stiffened his demands and thereby drove away many of the half-hearted ones, he was unnecessarily harsh. It would have been better to keep them with him and gradually bring them into a sense of the fuller truth.

To have taught as Jesus did was a great and wonderful thing. This by itself entitles him to a position first among men. But Jesus did not share the opinion of those who have considered that this was enough. Of course, he must have appreciated the value of his teachings. He would not have had a "sane and well-poised mind" if he was blind to the need of men for just such truth as he put into his vivid sayings and forceful parables. But he saw a larger duty beyond. To bring the matter to an issue, he had to go on. The Kingdom must be explained, the teacher must teach; but the Messiah must also strike one signal blow for the new life. There must be no mistake.

IV

So it was that he raised the level of his requirements till the mass of his followers ebbed away; then he announced to his little circle of disciples that he was going to Jerusalem to face the authorities at the nation's capital, to bring to a crisis the issue of the Kingdom of God. It is suggested that some of his followers may have hoped that he would be successful in winning the leaders to his side. The records are plain that this was no expectation of Jesus himself. He was as sure that the conflict would end in his death as he was sure that he must provoke the same conflict to carry out his vocation.

That the ordeal was difficult for him we know well. There was that terrible hour in the Garden of Gethsemane and one despairing cry on the cross, but there was no change in his determination.

In Jerusalem he once and for all made perfectly clear the difference between darkness and light. He had always "lived out his teachings" wherever he was; but now he did more than merely follow his own precepts, he placed himself on record as willing and ready to die to prove that the difference between himself and his opponents was irreconcilable. "The plain mechanic of Nazareth" would not be left alone. He was not willing to teach his little flock in some quiet out-of-the-way corner of the land. The teacher who gave the world the Sermon on the Mount and the matchless story of the Good Samaritan deliberately forced the issue on the rulers of the Jews. They could not pass him over, they had to declare for or against him. Their decision was what he expected—death on Calvary.

V

The point of interest to us at the present moment is that the decision in the forty days pointed the way to the Cross. The mission that Jesus there undertook could not, as he saw it, be fulfilled by the ordinary life of a teacher of righteousness, however admirable such a life might be. If we examine the silent struggle in the wilderness from this point of view, we can perhaps come closer to comprehending the nature and seriousness of that struggle. No wonder it lasted through forty days. No wonder he was exhausted by it.

Questions may be asked, Did he really at that moment face the ultimate issue? Was he not rather deciding the general course of his life, and did not the last necessity develop later? They are fair questions and one can only suggest the basis for answers. First of all, let it be remembered that Jesus was thirty years old when he faced his destiny there. He was no dreaming boy living in a world of unrealities. Then, he was a student of his country's history and a keen observer of human motive. He knew what "kingdom" agitation meant where Pharisees, on the one hand, and Romans, on the other, were to be considered. Had he planned simply a campaign of teaching, he might well have avoided the dangerous terms that he employed. In the synagogue at Nazareth he sounded the first warning of the sharp conflict. He disclaimed miraculous knowledge of times and seasons, but his divine insight must surely have shown him the truth.

If this be so, his every aim in life was consummated in his death. The final explanation of the Kingdom was his sacrifice. His teachings were incomplete until he had taken the only means in his power to force their full meaning, not only on the rulers of the Jews but upon the hearts of his own disciples. Jesus' teachings are taken abstractly today just as they were two thousand years ago. Of late some of our best ethical teachers have referred to the fact that the Sermon on the Mount has suffered from too much praise. It is reverenced but not obeyed. An American can read the parable of the Good Samaritan with tears in his eyes and then go out to ill-treat the first immigrant he meets. Whatever its larger significance, the determination to provoke the tragic conflict in Jerusalem meant that he believed his own teaching was real. He had no idea that men could take it or leave it as they

chose. He certainly did not offer it as an object of our courteous and admiring approval. He offered the supreme sacrifice of himself to insist that it was founded upon eternal principles and that men faced an eternal choice when they faced him and his message. You and I may make of it what we will, in Jerusalem he threw down the gauntlet not only to the rulers of the Jews but to the rulers of Asia and of Europe and America. With all else that it is, his death was the final stamp of approval to the mission of his life.

VI

The result of it all we know well. Out of death he came into life again. The disciples gained new courage when they were convinced that their Master was among them once more. Then they began to appreciate that their own lives could not go on as they had gone on before. They saw what Jesus intended men to see, that there is indeed a clear and sharp division between the kingdom of this world and the Kingdom of God. We cannot explain the transformation of these men, we can only try it out for ourselves.

Some years ago we might have balked at the great question. But the months that have passed since July, 1914, have shown us that men will dare to die. Can we then face up to the question of following Our Master here as elsewhere? Are we all of us willing, if called upon, to seal our life work with our death?

DAILY READINGS

Twelfth Week, First Day: Life Through Death

And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. —Matt. 10: 38, 39.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.—John 12: 24.

And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the

whole world, and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?—Mark 8: 34-37.

How shall we interpret these sayings?

Twelfth Week, Second Day: The Cost of Discipleship

Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, when he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, as he goeth to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and asketh conditions of peace. So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.—Luke 14: 25-33.

How does this apply to Jesus' life?

Twelfth Week, Third Day: The Way of the Cross

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and saith, Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.—Mark 8: 31-33.

Why did Jesus say "Get thee behind me, Satan"?

Twelfth Week, Fourth Day: A Parable

And they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and

they that followed were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him, saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him unto the Gentiles: and they shall mock him, and shall spit upon him, and shall scourge him, and shall kill him; and after three days he shall rise again.—Mark 10: 32-34.

And he began to speak unto them in parables. A man planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a pit for the winepress, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruits of the vineyard. And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and him they wounded in the head, and handled shamefully. And he sent another; and him they killed: and many others; beating some, and killing some. He had yet one, a beloved son: he sent him last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard. What therefore will the lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others. Have ye not read even this scripture:

The stone which the builders rejected,
The same was made the head of the corner;
This was from the Lord,
And it is marvellous in our eyes?—Mark 12: 1-11.

Can we put these passages together?

Twelfth Week, Fifth Day: Gethsemane

And they come unto a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed, and sore troubled. And he saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: abide ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass away from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto

thee; remove this cup from me: howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came, and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they knew not what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough; the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Arise, let us be going: behold, he that betrayeth me is at hand. —Mark 14: 32-42.

Can you imagine the issue that Jesus met in the garden of Gethsemane?

Twelfth Week, Sixth Day: The Gauntlet Flung Down

And they led Jesus away to the high priest: and there come together with him all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes. And Peter had followed him afar off, even within, into the court of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers, and warming himself in the light of the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found it not. For many bare false witness against him, and their witness agreed not together. And there stood up certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands. And not even so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and saith unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What further need have we of witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? And they all condemned him to be worthy of death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and

to buffet him, and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the officers received him with blows of their hands. . . .

And straightway in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering saith unto him, Thou sayest. And the chief priests accused him of many things. And Pilate again asked him, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they accuse thee of. But Jesus no more answered anything; insomuch that Pilate marvelled.—Mark 14: 53-65; 15: 1-5.

Twelfth Week, Seventh Day: The Ultimate Triumph

Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also.—I Cor. 15: 1-8.

It is left to Paul to sum up the final triumph of Jesus Christ.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The book of Acts is the best comment on this lesson. A patient review of it in the light of Jesus' attitude toward his mission will prove infinitely rewarding.

CHAPTER XIII

Called of God

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK

These studies began with a consideration of the special mission of the Hebrew people as interpreted by themselves. An endeavor was made to indicate how they regarded their relationship to Jehovah as one of purpose. Then a number of very familiar characters were studied from the point of view suggested by the writers of the Bible themselves.

The whole matter is summed up by a New Testament writer in the Epistle to the Hebrews; from this book we propose to quote what serves as a most fitting conclusion. The version used is taken from the New Testament section of "The Shorter Bible," translated and arranged by Charles Foster Kent:

The Invincible Power of Faith

Now faith is the assurance that we will receive the things for which we hope, the conviction of the reality of things we do not see. It was because of their faith that the men of old were approved by God. Through faith we perceive that the universe was perfected by God's command and that what is visible was made out of the invisible.

Through faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain and so received the assurance that he was a righteous man, for God approved of his gifts. Though dead, yet because of his faith he still speaks.

Through faith Enoch was taken up to heaven so that he did not die, and he could not be found, because God had taken him. Before he was taken to heaven he received the assurance that he was well pleasing to God; but without faith it is impossible to please him, for the man who comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly try to find him.

Through faith Noah, after having been told by God about events still unseen, in reverence constructed an ark to save his household; and in doing so he condemned the world and became heir to the righteousness that comes through faith.

Through faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go to the place which he was to receive as an inheritance, and he went, though he did not know where he was going. Through faith he made his home in the land that had been promised to him as in a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who shared the same promise with him. For he was looking for the city with firm foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Through faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered Isaac and was ready to sacrifice his only son, although he had received the divine promises and had been told, "It is through Isaac that your descendants will be reckoned," for he believed that God was able to raise men even from the dead.

Through faith Moses was hidden for three months after birth by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful and they had no fear of the king's decree. Through faith Moses, when he had come to maturity, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, preferring ill-treatment with God's people to the short-lived pleasures of sin. Through faith he instituted the passover and the sprinkling of blood, that the destroyer of the eldest sons of the Egyptians might not touch the Israelites.

What more shall I say? For time would fail me if I tried to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, of David and Samuel, and the prophets—they who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises from God, closed the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, in the hour of weakness were made strong, proved valiant in war time, and put to flight foreign armies.

Women received back their dead restored to life; others were tortured, refusing release, that they might be raised to a better life; others stood the test of taunts and blows, yes, even chains and imprisonment. They

were stoned, they were burned, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was unworthy), wandering in lonely places and among the hills, in caves and in holes in the ground. Through faith they all won God's approval, but they did not receive the promised blessing, for God had planned something better for us, that apart from us they should not attain perfection.

DAILY READINGS

Thirteenth Week, First Day: Kingdoms Conquered

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm-tree of Deborah between Ramah and Beth-el in the hill-country of Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not Jehovah, the God of Israel, commanded, saying, Go and draw unto mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee, to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thy hand.—Judges 4: 4-7.

And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east; they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance in Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. . . .

And the angel of Jehovah came, and sat under the oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto him, and said unto him, Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.—Judges 6: 3, 4; 11, 12.

And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of Jehovah appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive, and bear

a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come upon his head; for the child shall be a Nazirite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. . . .

And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and Jehovah blessed him.—Judges 13: 2-5; 24.

Then the Spirit of Jehovah came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto Jehovah, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be Jehovah's, and I will offer it up for a burnt-offering. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and Jehovah delivered them into his hand. And he smote them from Aroer until thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto Abelcheramim, with a very great slaughter. So the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.—Judges 11: 29-33.

Names from the Roll of Honor.

Thirteenth Week, Second Day: Beyond the Pale

And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. But he said unto him, A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many: and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant came, and told his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the servant said, Lord, what thou

didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.—Luke 14: 15-24.

The parables should, of course, be studied each as a unit. It is easy to overdo their interpretation by taking details to mean something that can only be evolved by an active imagination and so obscure the fundamental meaning.

How does this parable illuminate the "call of God"?

Thirteenth Week, Third Day: The Great Refusal

And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, even God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and mother. And he said unto him, Teacher, all these things have I observed from my youth. And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.—Mark 10: 17-22.

This is a curious call; it has drawn out elaborate explanations from many commentators.

What do you think Jesus meant?

Read the succeeding verses, Mark 10: 23-25. Put the situation into a modern setting.

Thirteenth Week, Fourth Day: One Body, Many Members

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say,

Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; it is not therefore not of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary: and those parts of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; whereas our comely parts have no need: but God tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.—I Cor. 12: 12-25.

It is God who has given each man his peculiar gifts, it is He who has provided the opportunity to use them.

Are we not all, then, really "called of God"?

Thirteenth Week, Fifth Day: A Commission and a Promise

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and charged them, saying, Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses: no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food. And into whatsoever city or village ye shall enter, search out who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go forth. And as ye enter into the house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. . . .

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to councils, and in their synagogues they will scourge

you; yea and before governors and kings shall ye be brought for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.—Matt. 10: 5-13; 16-20.

Thirteenth Week, Sixth Day: The New Chosen People

But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.—I Peter 2: 9, 10.

The first Christians were Jews. They carried over into the new faith the sense of mission, and in such passages as this give perfect expression to the fundamental idea. In many places Paul preaches the doctrine that the Jews no longer have any special claim on God, but that His leadership is for all. Though the scope is widened, the intensity remains the same. The new Christians never lost sight of the truth that they were "called of God."

Thirteenth Week, Seventh Day: Jesus and His Disciples

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. . . .

Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you. Ye did not choose me, but

I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye may love one another. If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.—John 15: 1-5; 14-19.

John's gospel was, so we believe, written over sixty years after the death of Jesus. It is the closing word of the Bible. Jesus, at one in will and purpose with his Father, lays special stress on the order of choice. It is Jesus, it is God, who makes the first move.

It is the heart of all true religion, the heart of Christianity —that the first reality in the universe is God and that he sought us long before we were moved to seek him. We may well add to the question, How God calls men? the further inquiry, Why does God call men?

God calls men because there is behind everything his eternal purpose, in which we each have a part. The "far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves" is an event that includes us one and all.

To find God's will for us and then to follow it, wherever it may take us, is the central problem for every Christian.

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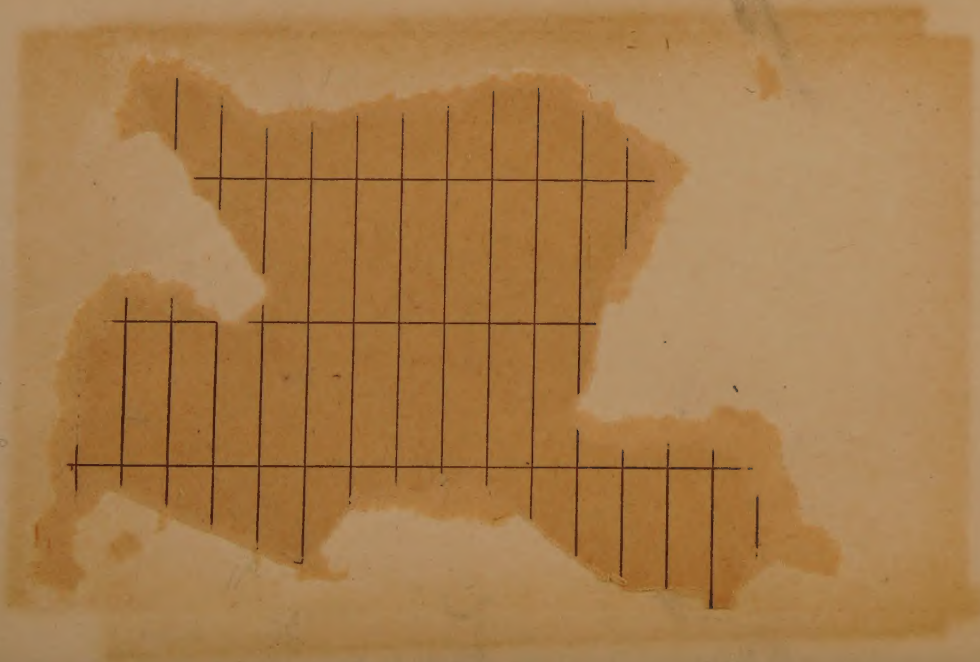

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